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Outline Studies in Mark

**Outline Studies
in
Mark**

by
John L. Hill

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OUTLINE STUDIES IN MARK

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FOREWORD

This volume is an attempt of a layman to interpret and to apply the Gospel of Mark for the average reader. It is my deep conviction, as the result of years given to the study and teaching of the Bible, that people are eager to know what the Book says and that they also want the Book to be permitted to say what it means. In these messages I have had just this twofold demand in mind, and have been gratified that so any have called them "down to earth" messages.

The King James Version of the Scriptures has been used; every chapter heading begins with Jesus and represents him in action or as the center of action; and effort has been made, through the headlines of the outlines and suggestive topics, to apply the Master's teachings to daily living. The "Dr. Robertson" mentioned so frequently is the late Dr. A. T. Robertson, whose *Word Pictures of the New Testament* is indispensable to students of the New Testament. I am indebted to the Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention for permission to quote from this work.

It is of interest to record that these studies in abbreviated form were broadcast over WSM, Nashville's clear-channel station. The reception given them by a large radio audience accounts in part for their publication in complete form.

J. L. H.



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JESUS BEGINS HIS WORK

Mark 1:1-22

THE SIMPLE BEGINNINGS OF JESUS' MINISTRY SUGGEST THE CHRIST

MARK'S GOSPEL

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Source Materials
Distinctive Traits

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The Temptation
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SUGGESTIVE

Pathmakers
Simple Preaching
A Voice or an Echo?

MEN GAVE RESPECT TO HIS WORDS AS TO THOSE OF NO OTHER

MARK'S GOSPEL

There seems to be little difference of opinion as to the human authorship of Mark's Gospel. Most students of the New Testament agree that this Gospel was written by John Mark, son of Mary, whose house was a meeting place of the early disciples. John was also a cousin of Barnabas, a co-worker with Paul, and an intimate associate of Simon Peter. By environment and contacts, therefore, he was

peculiarly equipped for the leadership of the Holy Spirit in giving us this very dramatic Gospel.

Mark's is the oldest of the Gospels—some place the date as early as A.D. 50—and furnishes the skeleton for both Matthew and Luke, who use nearly all of it in their own Gospels. It is not known positively that Mark had any historical source materials, but it is generally accepted that he drew from Simon Peter much of the detail to which his Gospel owes its colorfulness. Some say that Peter suggested and read the manuscript, some that Mark acted as Peter's secretary; all agree that Mark's Gospel was available to Matthew and Luke.

It is more than likely that the Gospel was written in Rome and may have been known as the Roman Gospel. Because it contains more Aramaic phrases than the other Gospels, some have claimed that Aramaic was the original language of the Gospel. By the same token, others have said that it was written in Latin because it contains more Latin phrases and idioms than the other Gospels. Those who hold to the view that it was first written in Greek account for the peculiarities mentioned by the accepted fact that Peter usually spoke in Aramaic and that the actual writing was done in Rome.

These details, while tremendously interesting, are not of vital importance for the average student or teacher. We have the Gospel of Mark, and it is ours to study, to interpret, and to apply. Certain distinctive traits stand out. It is the shortest of the four Gospels. As has already been observed, it is the earliest of the four. Even casual reading reveals the fact that it is less concerned with discourses than with deeds. It is the Gospel of action; it fairly throbs with vivid scenes, in which are found many details peculiar to

Mark. In spite of his—or Peter's—mastery of details, Mark makes no attempt to present a complete biography of Jesus. Rather, as Dr. Robertson says, does he confine himself largely to the scope of Peter's preaching as seen in Acts 10:36-42, which covers in outline the events from the ministry of John the Baptist to the resurrection of Jesus. Some hostile critics have used Mark's silence on the Virgin Birth to discredit the accounts of Matthew and Luke. Of course this is nonsense, for Mark says nothing at all about the birth of either John the Baptist or Jesus. Dr. Robertson says, "This Gospel is the one for children to read first and is the one that we should use to lay the foundation for our picture of Christ." Fortunate are we, therefore, in the privilege of this study; let us use this privilege thoughtfully, reverently, helpfully.

UNIQUE OPENING—1:1-4

In the outline which appears at the beginning of each study, note first the emphasis lines across the top and bottom of the outline. These lines are an effort to express the central thought of the passage being discussed and a secondary thought closely related to it. More and more I am impressed with the value of the structure of the Scriptures in proclaiming their divine origin. I submit that the simple beginnings of Jesus' ministry suggest the Christ. No human biographer of any great character would ever use the simple introduction which Mark employs. Think it through, run over in mind the stories of earth's great and near great. Can you recall a single one that even approaches the words of our text in sheer inconspicuousness and eloquent omission? No, men do not write that way. Again,

it is easily observable that men gave respect to the words of Jesus which they did not show for the words of any other. Why? Clearly, they must have concluded from the very beginning that Jesus was more than man, long before they were ready to acknowledge him as the Son of God. I am trying to say that the natural characteristics of the gospel story testify to its inspiration and to the deity of him of whom it speaks.

The opening of Mark's Gospel is unique; it just opens. The original Greek contains no article. Instead, therefore, of "The beginning," the original would have it merely "Beginning." I have no explanation for this unusual style, but do recognize its vividness; without preliminary statement or build-up the author introduces his subject. There is no doubt at all as to what begins: we are reading about the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Mark is about to tell the message about Jesus the Anointed One, the promised Messiah, the Son of the living God. Let no one imagine that there is any uncertainty in the inspired writer's mind about the identity of Jesus. Mark proclaims the gospel of a person who is none other than God in human form.

Before concluding his opening sentence Mark links his story with prophecies with which every early reader would be entirely familiar. This method is sound psychologically and is in line with the very best principles of teaching. Mark's contemporaries were familiar with Malachi 3:1, "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me"; and with Isaiah 40:3, "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God." Mark's words are not exact quotations, but they

carry the thought of the original and open the way for the positive declaration that these prophecies had actually been fulfilled.

With just as few words as possible Mark presents John the Baptist, of whom all knew, as the one to whom the prophets referred. John did baptize in the wilderness; everybody knew that. John did preach baptism of repentance; that is, a repentance involving a changing of mind and a confession of sin which would prepare one for baptism. But for preconceptions, the phrase "for the remission of sins" would present no difficulty. Whatever it means, many passages of Scripture bearing directly on the remission of sins do not permit it to mean that baptism was the means of obtaining forgiveness of sins. The phrase cannot mean "for the purpose of the remission of sins." From my limited use of the Greek, I do not recall that the preposition *eis*, translated "for" in this phrase, has any such general meaning. Nine times out of ten we would translate it "into"; that is its regular meaning. Westcott and Hort's lexicon, a recognized authority, says that *eis* means "into, to, towards, unto." If we would let the Bible say what it wants to say, the meaning here is plain. The Jews were familiar with baptism for proselytes who became Jews. Now John in his preaching is announcing that the Jews, the same as pagans, must repent of their sins in order to get into the kingdom of God. Their baptism, as Paul later fully explained, was merely a symbol of the death to sin and resurrection to new life in Christ. John's baptism in Jordan was a concrete challenge of his message of repentance.

JOHN AND JESUS—1:5-11

Mark compresses into a few verses the ministry of John the Baptist and his personal contacts with Jesus. Verse 5 is a perfect illustration of how much can be said in only a few words. John was having a fruitful ministry, as was attested by the fact that the people from all Judea, including those from Jerusalem, kept going out to hear him. The verb "went out" is imperfect tense and means that they went and kept on going to the place where John was preaching. It is observable that the message of John was the drawing card. When the people heard John, they were all baptized by him in the Jordan river, confessing their sins. This verse throws light on the meaning of the preceding verse. John preached, the people heard, were convicted and baptized, confessing their sins. Here is nothing about being baptized that their sins might be forgiven; they confessed their sins because the Spirit of God used the message of John to convict them of their sins; then would come naturally baptism along with the confession of sins. This was effective and complete preaching.

John was a rugged preacher of the wilderness, and his garb and manner of living were in keeping with his station. He was clothed with a garment—or raiment (Matt. 3:4)—of camel's hair. Mark merely calls it camel's hair, without telling us anything about the actual construction of the garment. It would seem to be clear that he was not draped in camel's skin, but wore a cloth robe woven of camel's hair, thus imitating the garb of the original Elijah. The garment was held in place with a skin girdle about his loins. John's food came from what nature provided, without special exertion on his part. He found the locusts,

possibly dried, very palatable, and the wild or "mountain" honey was available in abundance. I have never eaten locusts, but do not question their nutritive value. Our boys on the coast of Africa write jestingly about getting their meat ration by swallowing involuntarily the insects that infest that country.

The testimony of this stalwart forerunner is plain and given in sincere humility. He merely states that one is coming after him who is mightier than he, the latchet—or leather thong which held the sandal together—of whose shoes he is not worthy to stoop down and untie. This last reference is doubtless to the service performed by a slave as a guest enters the house. Honestly John thought that he was not worthy to perform this slave's labor for the Master. Continuing, John announced that Jesus would baptize in the Holy Spirit, even as he himself had baptized in water.

During John's phenomenally fruitful ministry, Jesus came down from Nazareth and presented himself for baptism at the hands of John. Mark's description of this incomparable scene is impressively simple! He just says that Jesus was baptized of John in Jordan. "Straightway"—a favorite word with Mark—as Jesus came up out of the water he saw the heavens rent or split and the Spirit like a dove coming down upon him, and he heard a voice from heaven saying, "Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." This constitutes heavenly recognition of the deity of Jesus, as well as the Father's pleasure in this formal beginning of Jesus' earthly ministry.

SIGNIFICANT EVENTS—1:12-14a

Mark gives only little more than two verses to certain matters of sufficient importance to claim rather lengthy

treatment in the other two Synoptics. We shall, of course, confine ourselves to Mark's account, which in no sense because of its brevity conflicts with the other records. The temptation of Jesus is one of the dramatic experiences in the life of our Lord, and has possibly never been fully understood by interpreters. It is enough for us to note the simple facts. Mark says that the Spirit drove Jesus into the wilderness. He uses here the same word that is used later in the driving out of demons, but in the latter cases the word is translated "cast out." Of course we know what the phrase means even though we do not understand why it is necessary for the Spirit to "drive" Jesus anywhere. I think Dr. Robertson is correct in his statement, "The entire earthly life of Jesus was bound up with the Holy Spirit from his birth to his death and resurrection," and the "driving" referred to by Mark must have been something like an inner urge.

Jesus remained in the wilderness forty days, during which time he was tempted of Satan. Matthew and Luke tell us in detail about the three temptations; Mark omits these but adds the rather intimate touch that Jesus was with the wild beasts in the wilderness. This desolate, humanly uninhabited area was the home, especially at night, of the wild animals of the whole region. Their presence certainly added nothing to the comfort of the lonely Master. His loneliness, however, was complete only in that he had no human companions. The angels ministered unto him; and, since the tense here is imperfect, we are justified in saying that they kept on ministering just as often and as long as he needed their services. God's ministering mercy does not spend itself with one act; his mercies come new every morning.

The imprisonment of John the Baptist concerns us here

only as it affected the movement of Jesus. John's heroic witness drew the wrath of Herod and caused bitter attacks in Jerusalem and environs on all associated in any way with John and his message. Judea, the home of the ecclesiastics and the legalists, was never very hospitable to Jesus. John's arrest, therefore, was the occasion for concern, if not for alarm.

After the imprisonment of John, Jesus came into Galilee. More than once Jesus left hostile territory to escape the wrath of those who would do him bodily injury. In so doing he did not question the love and the ability of his Father; he was merely exercising intelligent discretion, that the work which he came to do might not be interrupted. Galilee was so sympathetic and so much of his ministry was confined to Galilee that the world almost by common consent refers to Jesus as the Galilean.

JESUS THE PREACHER—1:14b-22

Jesus was pre-eminently and primarily the teacher. Friends and enemies alike addressed him as Master, without meaning to imply that they recognized in him exceptional power or authority; they were using the polite word for one who was universally accepted as teacher. It is interesting, therefore, to have a brief glimpse of Jesus as preacher—his message, his method, and the consequences of his preaching. I see no justification for the effort to contrast the message of John the Baptist with that of Jesus. Some say that the keynote of John's preaching is repentance, while that of Jesus is gospel. I don't see it. The plain reader of the Gospels will be impressed with the fact that John and Jesus brought essentially the same message, with the easy understanding that Jesus was the one of whom John

spoke and would therefore be expected to give elaboration and life to John's brief words.

Mark says that Jesus preached the gospel of the kingdom of God, saying that the time was fulfilled. This last statement is found only in Mark, and must mean, as John intimated, that the prophecies with which his hearers were acquainted were now fulfilled. Removing all doubt as to his meaning, Jesus flatly said that the kingdom of God was at hand. That sounds very much like John's proclamation and can have only the one meaning, that the King had come. This being true, it was now time for the people to repent and to believe the gospel. It is well to remember that the word "time" used by Mark is not the ordinary word from which we derive chronology, but is the word which means "opportunity," or crisis created by the opportunity. In other words, the Master said that the way was now open to repent and to believe the gospel. Repentance and faith are thus early linked as human prerequisites to salvation. We take it that Mark gives only the outline of the Master's preaching, and it is a marvelous outline in both content and brevity. We submit that this is a very fine picture of Jesus, the preacher, in action.

Following the preaching scene—we have no way of knowing how long—Mark gives us his first glimpse of Jesus in action. The Master was walking along the shore of the Sea of Galilee, the body of water which his ministry around and on it was to make forever famous and hallowed, when he saw two brothers, Simon and Andrew, fishing with a net, for fishing was their business. We do not know what these two men knew about Jesus. We only know that Jesus, apparently as soon as he saw them, told them to come after him, with the promise that he would cause them

to become fishers of men. I would not be irreverent—surely I would not do violence to the text—but I have always thought that this invitation was given very informally and in the form of a condition. In other words, I have imagined that Jesus was attracted by the catch that these men were making and, approaching them, said in substance, “That’s a fine haul; you are succeeding splendidly. But if you will go with me, I will make you to become fishers of men.” It is very significant that Mark alone uses the words “to become.” We do not know whether or not this is due to Peter’s influence, for Peter certainly knew something of the process of becoming fishers of men; but it is in line with the Master’s dealings with his disciples. Men are saved instantaneously, but faithful servants of Jesus are grown. Jesus helps all of them who will to become fruitful laborers. It is interesting that the power in and through the words of Jesus caused these busy men to forsake their nets and follow him immediately.

A little further around the sea, Jesus saw another pair of brothers, James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were busily engaged in mending their nets preparatory to the next haul. Jesus straightway called them to come with him, using presumably the same words that he addressed to the others; and they left the business in the hands of their father along with the hired servants and followed Jesus. I believe that these four men were associated in the fishing business under some such firm name as Simon Peter and Company. The world would say that they showed little sense in giving up their business, but the world never has had much sense. In giving up their business they literally sacrificed themselves into immortality.

It is more than likely that Jesus had been a preacher for

more than a year; he had established headquarters in Capernaum; he never missed an opportunity to share the services in the synagogue, and frequently he was asked to participate. His reputation was now pretty well established in Capernaum. On this occasion Jesus was given the opportunity to speak, and while we do not have his words we are told that his hearers were astonished at his teachings—not so much it seems by the content as by the spirit of his teachings. They were accustomed to teaching; but their teachers, the scribes, usually Pharisees, were content to quote scribes who had preceded them and to dwell upon traditions to which the people had become slaves. Jesus quoted nobody; he spoke as one having authority himself. Of course they were astonished.

SUGGESTIVE

This passage is rich in suggestive material of practical value. I believe that every Bible selection should be linked with real living. In addition, therefore, to the exposition, I venture a few commonplace suggestions. The men and women who make it possible for others to achieve never receive their share of recognition at the hands of their fellow men. John the Baptist was a pathmaker, and Jesus gave him honored recognition in the statement that no greater man than John had ever been born of woman. In our personal lives, in the lives of our churches and of the agencies of our churches, are many who have made the sacrifices which faith prompted and others have entered more conspicuously into their labors and in many cases have received credit which did not properly belong to them. This is a good time to call the roll, in our own minds at least, of the pathmakers to whom we are indebted for the

JESUS BEGINS HIS WORK

comparatively smooth roads, and to thank God for them.

Many preachers know well that much so-called modern preaching is not effective, and such preachers are disturbed. Teachers and preachers alike may well study the subject matter and technique of John the Baptist and of Jesus. Such a study will reveal simplicity as an outstanding feature. The same groups would profit also by discovering that the most effective preaching of the modern pulpit is simple preaching. In my judgment the more closely the teacher or the preacher sticks to the Word itself, the simpler and more effective his work will be.

The prophet of God, ancient or modern, must be one who speaks for God; he must be really the voice of God. John called himself merely the voice of one crying in the wilderness. One of the easiest things for the spokesman for God to do is to cease to be the voice of God and become the echo of literature, of science, or even of Dr. So-and-so. I believe in scholarship, in wide reading, in the highest possible cultural development; but I do not believe in any or all of these attainments as substitutes for the Word of God. The scholarly preacher or teacher is one who is able to present the Book in all its clearness and beauty. No individual, class, or congregation is particularly interested in the opinions of mere men; but the whole world hungers for the truth of God. To give this truth to hungry souls is the high function of one who would be a voice for God; in this function the teacher must excel.

JESUS' MINISTRY OF LOVE

Mark 1:23-2:13

JESUS' DIVINEST TRAIT: COMPASSION FOR ALL MEN

A STIRRING SCENE—1:23-28

The Outcry
The Rebuke
Fame Spread

A NEW DAY—1:35-45

The Quiet Hour
The Preaching Tour
Service by the Way

JUSTIFYING HOSPITALITY—1:29-31

Company for Dinner
The Embarrassment
The Guest's Blessing

THE PALSIED HEALED—2:1-13

Crowded House
Miracle of Healing
By Sea Side

AT EVENING—1:32-34

The Situation
Needy Throngs
Tireless Worker

SUGGESTIVE

Needy Humanity
Majestic Tenderness
Perfect Adequacy

JESUS' COMPASSION IS EQUALED ONLY BY HIS POWER

This selection shows our Lord at his best among needy human beings. Our own limitations make it impossible for us to comprehend fully the character of Jesus, but our very consciousness of our own lack of his divine characteristics helps us to appreciate in some measure the beauties of his matchless personality. Not all readers may agree with me, but somehow the compassion which Jesus showed and continues to show toward all men impresses me as his divinest

trait. We cannot possess in full measure his compassion, but we do long for a worthy share of it because we know that compassion must undergird any successful effort to serve humanity in the name of Jesus.

Along with his compassion, it is glorious to know that Jesus has power to give effective expression to his feelings toward human beings. At times all of us reach fairly respectable heights of compassion for our fellow men. At such times we would gladly do anything in the world for them; but our ability is so limited, our reach so short, our resources so inadequate. Thank God for a Saviour whose infinite compassion is matched by equally infinite power!

A STIRRING SCENE—1:23-28

Unclean spirits, demons, and devils are used synonymously in the Gospels; always one so possessed is represented as estranged from God, and not infrequently some unclean spirit is given as the cause of the estrangement. It is also true that some disease, usually mental, accompanied the demon possession. Some very respectable authorities believe that certain classes among us today can be accounted for only on the ground that they are in the power of demons. I think that I have seen some demon-possessed people, but I may be wrong. Perhaps it is enough to know that the people of Christ's days on the earth ascribed certain mental and physical disturbances to evil spirits.

While Jesus was teaching in the synagogue, one of these unfortunate fellows interrupted with some loud outbursts in the form of questions: "What have we to do with thee . . . ? art thou come to destroy us?" Frankly I am a little disturbed about the plural pronoun. Dr. Robertson says that it is a case of double personality, the man speaking for him-

self and for the demon; he furthermore says that the same idiom appears in Matthew 8:29. In this latter reference, however, demon is plural. The confusion is not relieved by the fact that the singular pronoun appears twice in the same verse. True, the verse opens, "Let us alone"; but "us" is in italics, which indicates that the word is not in the original and therefore that some other pronoun, such as "me," could just as well have been inserted. The closing words of the verse contain the positive affirmation, "I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God." Clearly this would seem to be the unclean spirit speaking. The difficulty is in separating the man in the power of the unclean spirit from the spirit itself. Possibly this item is not important.

The rebuke administered by Jesus was emphatically directed to the unclean spirit which was ordered to hold its peace and to come out of the man. Many believe that "Hold thy peace" hardly conveys the meaning of the original. Moffatt translates it, "Be quiet"; but that is too mild. Gould translates it, "Shut up." Robertson says the idea is, "Be muzzled" like an ox. Our colloquial "Shut your mouth" is not far away from the idea. The unclean spirit in obeying the order of Jesus threw the unfortunate man into a spasm, cried with a hideous screech, and came out of him. One can imagine the excitement in the synagogue.

The reaction to this scene was perfectly natural. In fact, it was but a repetition or intensification of what has already been recorded (Mark 1:22). The teaching of Jesus had amazed his hearers, and to this cause of amazement is added the additional unprecedented fact that the demons obeyed him. Of course they questioned and talked among themselves, and of course the report or rumor or fame of Jesus spread everywhere through the region round about Galilee.

Modern methods of communication have not improved upon the effectiveness of the word-of-mouth method of spreading news.

JUSTIFYING HOSPITALITY—1:29-31

After this most strenuous season in the synagogue Jesus accompanied Simon and Andrew, along with James and John, to Simon's house. Evidently Andrew made his home with his brother. We do not know much about the home life of the early disciples of Jesus. As I recall now, this is the only glimpse that we have into a home of one of the twelve. In addition to the two men mentioned, Simon's mother-in-law lived with her daughter and son-in-law. Do you know anything about the propensity of preachers to take company home to dinner? If you do, you can understand this situation. Try to imagine the feelings of Mrs. Simon as she stood at the window and saw her almost irresponsible husband coming home with three guests. Perhaps we should refrain from trying to repeat her words; it may be that long since she had schooled herself to expect only the thoughtless of Simon. It does seem that he would have remembered that there was sickness in the home; but here he came, laughing and talking with his friends as though the little wife were expecting all of them and had made preparation for their entertainment. Yes, the scene is strangely familiar.

It must be said in defense of Jesus that he did not know of the illness of Simon's wife's mother. Evidently she had been sick for some days, since she lay prostrate with fever. Jesus must have noted the awkward embarrassment of the group as they steered him away from the sickroom. Of course they could not conceal the illness indefinitely, so

presently they tell Jesus about it. Perhaps this is a good place to remark that it is never a bad time to invite Jesus into the home, and that his presence improves any condition, no matter how serious.

It is both interesting and inspiring to watch the calm manner of Jesus in the sickroom. We do not know that the sick woman had ever seen Jesus, although it is more than likely that he had been in the home before, but we can be certain that his presence was at once reassuring. He walked over to her bed, took her by the hand and lifted her up, and immediately the fever left her. Some will say, of course, that the woman was only slightly indisposed and that her recovery was not remarkable, to say nothing of miraculous; but the evidence is against them. Luke, the physician, says that she was "taken with a great fever." Even those of us who are not physicians know that people do not recover instantly from fever; some of us have had fever. The touch of Jesus drove the fever out and gave her strength to join her daughter in ministering to their guests. Most of us find no difficulty in believing this simple story, and we gladly recognize the blessing that Jesus brought to the distressed home.

AT EVENING—1:32-34

The Jewish sabbath ended at sunset, hence the care exercised by the writers in giving the exact time of the evening. Mark is doubly accurate. He not only says it was evening—"at even"—he specifies that the sun had set. The time of the evening, therefore, released the people from the customary sabbath restrictions and left them free to follow the leading of their own inclinations. The day had been what we might call an electric one for the little city. The report of the

casting out of the demon in the synagogue had gone all over the town; and the masses, of course, were less disturbed because such an act violated the sabbath than they were excited over the miracle. Following closely upon this report came the news that Jesus had healed Simon Peter's wife's mother. No doubt Simon's home was well known in the city and many people were acquainted with the illness there. It is not difficult to imagine the excitement that ran all over the city as the people, relieved of their daily duties because of the sabbath, gave themselves to the discussion of what was taking place right within the bounds of their own city.

Just as soon as sunset released them, the whole city rushed to Simon's door. We understand these words and do not take them to mean that everyone in the city came, but it seemed that everybody was there. The majority of these were drawn by what we call curiosity. I should not be surprised if curiosity is the greatest drawing card known to people in general. Some years back when the authorities were trying to solve the mystery of the kidnaping of the Lindbergh baby, a woman with a child of about the same age showed up in a hotel in a little town in the Cumberland in Tennessee. The rumor got out that this was the kidnaped baby, and newspaper reporters from all over the nation rushed to this obscure town, while the masses within a radius of one hundred miles literally jammed the highways in their efforts to reach the place of momentary interest and excitement. As I study the life of Jesus I am persuaded that the throngs of people were drawn to him by curiosity. There were many in this company, however, who came with the expectant faith that Jesus might heal their loved ones. These were easily discoverable in the curious multitude: mothers were carrying their sick babies; loved ones

led or half-supported the lame, the paralyzed, the demon-possessed, the blind; groups brought on pallets the helpless and almost hopeless; all afflicted or sick or defective or suffering ones must have their chance even at nightfall, because the great Healer might not be available again. What a compliment to our blessed Lord that the people believed he had the power and the willingness to heal their diseases and to relieve their distresses.

The pride of Simon Peter as he witnessed this incomparable scene was surpassed only by the tears and joy of the healed and their loved ones. Mark does not tell us how Jesus worked. Dr. Robertson thinks that the Master stood in the doorway and healed the great crowds as they passed by. Luke tells us that Jesus laid his hand on every one of the sufferers as they moved on in a steady stream. We can almost see the compassion of the happy Worker through the assuring smile that lighted up his matchless face. Only one little detail is given: Jesus would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him. I think it is just as well for me to remain silent on the subject of why he would not permit them to speak; I don't know why. I do know, however, that this was one of the great scenes in the life of our Lord in which he showed himself entirely divine, with compassion equaled by adequate power.

A NEW DAY—1:35-45

The Master deserved a good night's rest, but he was awake early the next morning—"a great while before day," Mark says. Dr. Robertson says that Mark's words refer to the early part of the last watch of the night from three to six in the morning. Jesus got up and went out of the house and out of the city to a quiet place where he prayed. There

is no sense in intruding on the privacy of this holy hour by suggesting reasons for his going or even, as some commentators do, by endeavoring to word his prayer. Such action borders closely on a presumption which even intellectual pride ought to be able to resist. Why not leave it as written? Jesus wanted quiet fellowship with the Father; he sought it and found it for a time at least. When the other members of the household awoke, Jesus was missed, and Simon and some of the others followed after him. When they found him, they told him that everybody was seeking him. The inference here is clear that Simon's intentions were good and that the friends of Jesus thought that he was missing a great opportunity not only for service but for increasing his hold upon the people. But Jesus had prayed it through and quietly told them that there were other towns in Galilee in which he must preach. In fact, he said that was why he had come out.

So the Master turns from popularity in a great city to the country towns and villages of no importance except that people lived in them who needed his message and his ministry. Herein is the solution of our so-called country church problem—namely, the dedication of our best lives to the service of responsive hearts in villages, towns, and out in the open spaces where conveniences are few but advantages are tremendous.

Here began what we might call a preaching tour which carried Jesus into all the synagogues in Galilee. We may be sure that his message was not unlike that which had already astonished his hearers. The only detail that we have concerning this first tour of Galilee is that he cast out demons.

While we know nothing about any of the set services which Jesus held, we are advised of one marvelous roadside

experience. A leper, representative of the most pitiful perhaps of all sufferers, came to him in a wonderful spirit of need and petition. He kneeled before Jesus and besought him, saying, "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." Isn't that a great statement of faith? There seems to be in the words "If thou wilt" an implication of the poor fellow's sense of unworthiness. He did not know Jesus, but he had no doubt about his ability to do what he wanted to do. We know, of course, that Jesus is just as willing as he is able; our unwillingness restricts his power. Mark did not have to say that Jesus was moved with compassion by both the attitude and the earnestness of the poor outcast. Jesus touched him, and said unto him, "I will; be thou clean." Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed. Jesus "straitly," or strictly, charged him, and sent him away with the words that he should say nothing to any man but should get his health certificate from the priest, according to Mosaic regulations, which would be accepted by the people. Well, so far as publicity was concerned, he did exactly what Jesus told him not to do: he published, blazed abroad, the whole thing so that presently everybody knew about it. As a result, Jesus had to avoid the cities and went out into the desert places, to which people continued to come to him from all quarters. Former students of Dr. Robertson will appreciate his characteristic comment here, "Some preachers are not so disturbed by the onrush of crowds."

There is one little item in this narrative which I cannot explain. I believe that Jesus meant it when he told the leper to say nothing about what had happened to him; I think he meant it when he told others in similar circumstances the same thing; and yet every one of them proceeded immediately to disobey his wish and command. Why? I do not be-

lieve the explanation so often given that the best way to spread a thing is to tell people not to tell. That holds ordinarily; but I do not think Jesus wanted to "spread the thing." I can account for this only on the ground that the healed parties were so overjoyed that they could not contain themselves; they did not mean to exhibit ingratitude by disobeying him who had healed them.

THE PALSIED HEALED—2:1-13

At the end of his first tour of Galilee, Jesus returned to his Galilean headquarters in the home of Simon Peter in Capernaum. He had not been there long before it was noised about that he had returned and was at home. Straightway throngs of people flocked to the house inso-much that there was no room in the house, nor was there additional standing room about the door, which evidently opened into the street. To this eager crowd Jesus preached.

Not all who had heard of Jesus' return were able to go to him. In an upstairs bedroom in one of the humbler cottages of the city was a palsied man who could not move himself from his little bed. On this particular day four friends of this unfortunate fellow were talking about the things that were going on in their city, emphasizing the cases of healing attributed to Jesus. In the course of the conversation one of them remarked that he wished their palsied friend could get to Jesus. This idea led to full discussion, with the result that they agreed to go get their friend and carry him to Jesus. Happily, even enthusiastically, they made their way to the afflicted man's room and advised him of their intention to carry him to Jesus. Each man got under a corner of the pallet, and the four proceeded to go to the house with their friend. Finding the door blocked with people so

that they could not get through, they climbed up the stairs at the side of the house, put their precious burden down on the flat roof, and lifted a sufficient number of tiles to let the pallet through; then, lying flat on the roof, each man at his corner lowered the pallet through the hole in the low ceiling and dropped it at the feet of Jesus.

I digress long enough to say that this is a perfect New Testament brotherhood, in which men banded together to bring their friend to Jesus, and together overcame what seemed to be insurmountable obstacles. I should love to see such a brotherhood in every church, and I believe it would work. No literature would be needed; no constitution would be required. The purpose would be to send men in pairs or in fours out after the unsaved and unenlisted. The program given as regularly as necessary would consist of the narration of the experiences of the teams, the testimony of those who had been reached, the giving out of new assignments, and earnest prayer for the success of their efforts. I believe such a movement would quicken the spiritual life of any church.

Well, when Jesus looked upon the palsied man at his feet and recognized the faith of all five that had put him there, he told the palsied man that his sins were forgiven. We can almost hear one of the four looking down through the ceiling say, "Can you beat that?" They wanted their friend to walk; they were not concerned about his sins. The scribes heard what Jesus had said, and among themselves accused Jesus of blasphemy because only God could forgive sins. Knowing all that was going on in their minds, Jesus asked them why they were thus reasoning, and then pushed the matter to a bit of fine teaching in the inquiry as to whether it was easier to say, "Thy sins be forgiven thee,"

or to say, "Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk." They could not see sins forgiven, but they could see a palsied man walk. Then the Master spoke with confidence and authority, saying, "That ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, . . . I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house." He obeyed immediately, and went forth before them all, with the result that all were amazed, glorified God, and said, "We never saw anything like this before."

The Master now left the house and sought fresh air and relaxation by the sea. He loved solitude by the sea, but was not to be permitted to indulge it long, for the crowd soon joined him, and he taught them.

SUGGESTIVE

This passage is full of food for meditation and personal use. Possibly we are living in the period of greatest human need. There are more people than ever before, and the needs of humanity are more and more varied. Of course the usual needs are before us, but as never before at the base of all human needs is the need for God to speak to troubled, anxious hearts. Here is the opportunity for friends of humanity to make known the sufficiency of our God. To fail here is to be guilty of treason against both God and man, and no man can plead innocent until he has at least made an effort to serve.

The tenderness of Jesus as with unruffled spirit he answered the repeated calls is tremendously impressive. One who has had ever so slight experience knows something of the heavy weight of the pressing crowds. Just to push one's way through the throngs is a wearing experience. Twice Jesus sought a little respite, but when this was denied him

no one could tell that he was weary, and no one found any trace of petulance or impatience. Jesus found his rest, as well as his meat, in doing the will of his Father with God-like tenderness. All who would minister to the hurts of humanity must cultivate increasingly the grace of patience and tenderness. Softness of speech as well as of touch is an admirable expression of reserve strength which comes from faith in God.

This passage magnifies clearly the complete adequacy of our Lord. The word "adequate" in its derivative sense means "equal to." I love to apply it after this fashion: using the form of an equation, put on the left of the equality sign God and on the right of it all the needs, problems, difficulties, troubles, ambitions known to man—and God equals any one or all of them. In the synagogue, in the sickroom, in the doorway, by the roadside, and in the crowded house, Jesus met all kinds of needs and met them adequately. While praising him for supplying our every need, we must be consistent and generous enough to recognize the needs of all men and to exert ourselves to the utmost to bring them in contact with our Saviour. It is wonderful to boost the adequate Christ.

JESUS MATCHES WITS WITH CRITICS

Mark 2:14-3:35

IT IS TRAGIC TO LOSE THE SPIRITUAL IN THE FORMAL

ON HUMAN CONTACTS—2:14-22

Levi Called
Levi's Guests
Disciples Fast

BY THE SEA—3:7-12

Multitudes Follow
Refuge Available
Secrecy Charged

ON SABBATH LAW—2:23-28

The Offense
David Cited
Lord of Sabbath

FOUNDATION TEACHING—3:13-35

Twelve Ordained
Dangerous Attack
His Brethren

THE WITHERED HAND—3:1-6

Interested Watchers
Open Miracle
Plot to destroy

SUGGESTIVE

Sabbath Observance
Fire of Prejudice
Worth of Humanity

UNBELIEF IS THE BASIS OF ALL MISUNDERSTANDING OF JESUS

For the central thought of this passage may I suggest the top emphasis line of the outline: It is tragic to lose the spiritual in the formal. Paul writes out of experience and observation as well as by inspiration when he warns against the "oldness of the letter" and insists that the letter kills while it is the spirit that giveth life (Rom. 7:6; II Cor. 3:6). Most of us have little patience with rituals, believing that there is always danger that the form will be magnified to

the underemphasis or even to the complete omission of the spiritual. However, we should be on our guard lest we adopt a formalism in worship that will have all of the weaknesses of a regular ritual without its beauty.

The truth of the bottom line of the outline is magnified in this selection, as well as in many other passages in the New Testament. Unbelief is the fundamental sin, and the sin behind which most critics of Jesus hide today, even as they did in the days of Jesus. Those who exercise faith in Jesus as Saviour and trust him as Lord have no trouble in believing his words and in trying to follow his teachings; it is not surprising that they who refuse to believe in him should have difficulty in understanding him. It would be a proper recognition of honesty and frankness, however, if such would say openly that their problem is unbelief rather than intellectual difficulty.

ON HUMAN CONTACTS—2:14-22

The first criticism directed against Jesus had to do with his human contacts. The informality of the Master is clearly illustrated in this particular scene. He was walking along the Great West Road which ran from Damascus to the Mediterranean. As he passed the tollgate, he was attracted by the man who kept the gate and collected toll for Herod Antipas—Levi, better known to us as Matthew, son of Alpheus, a publican, bitterly hated by his fellow Jews, who classed him with sinners. This feeling of the Jews toward Levi is readily understood by those who remember their Southern history. The “scalawag,” you will remember, was a Southern white man who accepted political appointment under the “carpetbaggers” in the reconstruction era. Such men, in the opinion of their contemporaries, had sold out

to the enemy and were plundering their own people. Levi derived his living by collecting taxes from his own people for the despised Roman government; incidentally, his profits came from such graft as he could extract from the rebellious taxpayers; they hated him. To this despised publican Jesus addressed perhaps the first courteous words that he had heard in many days, and the words were in the form of the simple command so often used by Jesus, "Follow me." The response was instant; Levi just got up and followed Jesus. Often I have wondered why men so readily obeyed this call of Jesus; but upon sober reflection I am persuaded that I would have followed him, even though I had never seen or heard of Jesus. The drawing power of his own personality must have been irresistible, even as it is now when Jesus is worthily presented.

We can sympathize with Levi. He had come to love Jesus, and he wanted to do something to show that love. He had an elegant home and ample resources to make possible an altogether delightful social occasion, such as a banquet or a reception. But he had no social standing! Too bad. Imagine Levi's approach to Jesus on this subject. Perhaps he said something like this: "Master, I wonder if you would accept an invitation to my house. I would like for my friends to meet you. They are considered a hard lot, but they are really good fellows, and I know they would love you." Of course Jesus accepted; there is no record that he ever declined a social invitation. The function was attended by many publicans and sinners, some of whom were already followers of Jesus, and they all sat at meat with Jesus and his disciples. Levi's heart must have thumped with happiness as he witnessed the realization of his dream. But the joy of the occasion was soon spoiled by the scribes and the

Pharisees, who stood outside the long hall of the house—lest their pious selves be contaminated by the unorthodox diners—and made fun of Jesus. This uninvited crew, outraged that Jesus would dine with social outcasts, asked his disciples to explain why Jesus ate and drank with publicans and sinners. The scribes, of course, classed publicans and sinners with Gentiles, to eat with whom was an offense for the Jews. Jesus elected to answer the question himself and, in words not unmixed with irony, I think, but wholly lost on the self-righteous Pharisees, said that only the sick, not the whole, needed a physician, and that he had come to call sinners, not the righteous, to repentance. That was a real answer, but I am afraid that the self-satisfied piety of the questioners made it impossible for them to comprehend it.

Apparently the disciples of John—who was still a prisoner in Herod's dungeon—had formed a very unnatural and unspiritual union with the Pharisees, whom John had denounced as broods of vipers. Now they asked Jesus why his disciples did not fast, since the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fasted regularly. Of course they were not seeking light, but rather embarrassment for Jesus. Jesus promptly silenced them with words which made clear the distinction between himself and all others. The members of a wedding party do not fast, said Jesus, so long as the bridegroom is present; but they will fast in the days when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them. Furthermore, Jesus separated himself from all who had gone before by saying that men did not sew new cloth on an old garment or put new wine in old bottles, lest in the one case the garment tear out around the patch and in the other the bottles and wine both be lost. New wine must be put into new bottles.

ON SABBATH LAW—2:23-28

Possibly Jesus' disregard for the Pharisaic rules for sabbath observance aroused more antagonism in the minds and hearts of the legalists than any other one thing. This question itself is a perfect illustration of the conflict between the formal and the spiritual. One time Jesus and his disciples were going through a field of grain—wheat or barley maybe, but not our corn—and as they were making their way through the standing grain the disciples pulled off some heads of grain and ate the kernels, thus going through the process of reaping and threshing, strictly forbidden on the sabbath. The Pharisees quickly pounced upon this act and asked Jesus why his disciples disregarded the sabbath laws.

The Master countered with an incident with which they were familiar. He cited the case of David, who violated the law by appropriating for himself and his hungry associates the shewbread, which it was not lawful for any but priests to eat. Necessity, therefore, justified the violation of technical laws. It was more important that the hunger of the disciples be met than that empty legalism be maintained.

In verse 27 Mark makes an invaluable contribution to the sacred record, his account containing only the profound words, "The sabbath was made for man [mankind], and not man for the sabbath." Thus Jesus declared for all time the independence of man over artificial institutionalism. The sabbath was made to promote the welfare of mankind, and must not be used to cripple man's growth and usefulness. The Synoptists join in the triumphant declaration that Jesus is Lord of the sabbath. This, of course, was news to the Pharisees, and the shock of it was not softened by the

little word Mark includes, "also" or "even," indicating that Jesus was aware that he was making a claim which only the Messiah could make. As Dr. Robertson so aptly observes, Jesus made the positive assertion that "he was not the slave of the sabbath, but the master of it."

THE WITHERED HAND—3:1-6

The guardians of the laws of the sabbath kept critical eyes upon Jesus. They were not interested in any good thing that he might do or say, nor were they concerned for the needs of any afflicted or suffering ones. To them the rigid observance of their petty rules for keeping the sabbath transcended in importance every other consideration. That is formalism or legalism gone to seed. Can you see this pious crowd, green with prejudice and hate, as they maliciously look for the evidence upon which to accuse Jesus? It isn't any wonder that men have so little respect for the self-righteous and the hypocritically pious; they are the worst possible representations of righteousness and godliness.

Well, this gang saw Jesus go again into the synagogue, into which they knew that a man had gone whose hand had become withered—his affliction was not congenital—by some disease or accident. They cared nothing for the unfortunate man, but they seemed to know that Jesus had the power to heal him. Since it was the sabbath day, their sole interest was confined to what Jesus would do on this day and in this situation. So one by one they filed in, and their inhuman curiosity was openly satisfied. Note the dramatic in this scene. No one had said anything to Jesus about the afflicted man, the very presence of affliction or need was enough to claim the Master's attention and power. In bold defiance of the long-bearded hypocrites, he ordered

the man with the withered hand to stand forth where all could see. Our sympathy goes out to this poor fellow, whose affliction had doubtless made him timid and possibly caused him to have what we call an inferiority complex. You notice that he does not say a word. As the man stood there in the public gaze, Jesus turned his eyes from him and directed to the ecclesiastical spies two withering questions which have not been answered yet. He asked them whether it was lawful to do good or to do evil on the sabbath days. Then before they could recover he followed this abstract question with a concrete one, "Is it lawful . . . to save life, or to kill?" Talk about merciless grilling—well, this is a superb example of it. What could they say? Nothing. And they haven't said anything yet. They just kept on holding their peace. A marvelous scene.

Complete master of the situation, Jesus "looked round about on them with anger," going from one to the other, "being grieved for the hardness [blindness] of their hearts." Then he turned to the afflicted man with the order that he stretch forth his hand. These words are very significant. The Master was angry, and there is nothing in his anger that is inconsistent with his love for humanity. I have no sympathy with the effort to picture Jesus as a colorless, apologetic individual; his perfect purity and his transparent honesty compelled him to look with anger upon the diabolical spirit manifested before him. Nowhere are we told not to hate the devil, and the devil never had more energetic representatives than these same Pharisees. I might observe that the devil has some pretty resourceful agents abroad in the land today, upon whom we cannot look except with anger. I do not believe the Master's anger was tempered with grief, as some say. He was grieved because their hearts were

hardened, but his anger was the manifestation of his feeling against wrong, so abundantly exhibited in their conduct. Somehow, I feel that our age could stand a rebirth of moral health grounded on honest-to-goodness hatred of wrong wherever found, in high or low circles. Well, the trustful man, the occasion for all this stir in the synagogue, obeyed the Master, stretched out his hand, and it became whole even as his other hand.

Thus publicly humiliated, the thwarted Pharisees stalked out of the synagogue in a perfect fury of anger and immediately took counsel with the Herodians, whom they hated only less than they did Jesus, how they might destroy Jesus. These rival classes met on the common ground of their hatred of Jesus, and put aside the respective loyalties which separated them that together they might destroy their common enemy.

BY THE SEA—3:7-12

From this tense scene in the synagogue Jesus and his disciples withdrew to the sea. Perhaps this withdrawal was due to the plot which was being formed against him; it may have been, but it is apparent to the reader of Mark that such withdrawals were a habit with Jesus. I can understand it, because I love the restfulness, the quiet, the reinforcement that come from moments by the still sea. Not long, however, was Jesus left to meditation. Great crowds followed him from Galilee, Judea, Jerusalem, Tyre and Sidon, Decapolis and Perea (beyond Jordan), and Idumea, which was practically a part of Judea, and which is mentioned only here in the New Testament. The mere mention of these areas indicates the extent of his fame, for these were drawn

to him by the great things which they had heard that he did.

Anticipating possible danger from the pressing of the needy throngs, Jesus arranged for his disciples to provide a small boat which should keep close to the shore and move along even as he did so that it would be available in the event of anything like a stampeding crush. There is no evidence that Jesus had to use the boat, but this is an excellent illustration of the Master's foresight.

Mark uses only three short verses to picture the scene by the sea, but these are colorful. Jesus had healed so many people that all who had plagues literally rushed upon him in the intense eagerness of each stricken one to have his case come to the attention of Jesus. This threat against the safety of Jesus was no less dangerous because it was free from hostility. Once I stood at about one-thirty in the morning within the enclosure of a New York City mission and watched a throng of hungry men break for the sandwiches and coffee provided for them by Christian benevolence. The pangs of hunger which drove these poor devils are suggestive of the mingled emotions of suffering and hope in the presence of a possible deliverer.

Unclean spirits, with whom we are becoming acquainted in Mark, recognized Jesus when they saw him, fell down before him, and cried out, calling him the Son of God. As before, Jesus charged them not to make him known, because presumably he did not want their testimony. Of course I do not know about this; I do know that we have a sufficiently large number of witnesses without the testimony of the demons. It is interesting to note that the verbs, "saw," "fell down," "cried," and "charged" are in the imperfect tense, which indicates repeated and continued ac-

tion in the past—all of which speaks of the intense excitement of this very trying ordeal.

FOUNDATION TEACHING—3:13-35

The Master now seeks the second of his favorite retreats, the mountains. We do not know which mountain, but we are told that he went up into a mountain and called to him as many as he would, and they answered his call. Luke tells us that Jesus prayed all night, in which case this personally chosen crowd watched with him or served as watch while the Master prayed. From the number invited to the mountain, after the night of prayer, Jesus selected twelve and set them apart for special work. Whether twelve was just an arbitrary number or was suggested by the fact that there were twelve tribes in Israel we do not know. I incline, however, to the latter idea, since Jesus did not have the habit of acting without some reason. Of course we do not know the ceremony of ordination used. We do know that he called them for the double purpose that they might be with him for training and then that they might become the sent-forth ones, or apostles. The double ministry of the apostles was to preach and to heal sicknesses and cast out devils. Of course the ministry of preaching and of healing was to characterize the work of the apostles. It comprehends, however, two things which are different and which could be performed separately.

Following the naming of the twelve, we are told, Jesus and the chosen ones came home from the mountain, where the crowds reassembled in such a jam that they could not even eat bread. When his close friends or kinsmen heard of these strenuous days, they came after him, saying that he was beside himself. It is not unlikely that Mary—if she was

in the company—thought that he was overwrought or unstrung from the excitement and desired to take him home for proper care.

In this critical time when even his loved ones would account for him on grounds other than those which he claimed, the ever-vigilant scribes from Jerusalem advanced the brilliant idea that Jesus was in the power of Beelzebub and was casting out devils by the prince of the devils. This last charge was too much, and gave Jesus the opportunity to refute their charges by one of his most brilliant excursions into the realm of reasoning. Note the stinging thrusts in the short parables that he uses. How is Satan going to cast out Satan? How can a kingdom divided against itself stand? How can a house divided against itself stand? How can Satan stand if he rise up against himself and be divided? Surely Satan would not plunder his own house and destroy the very demons through which he does his work. It simply does not make sense to charge that the devil was using Jesus to destroy devils. There is no recorded reply of his accusers to this devastating reasoning.

Jesus took advantage of their silence to speak some very strong words against blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. The scribes, in charging that Jesus had Beelzebub, had ascribed to the devil the work of the Holy Spirit. Thus, said Jesus, had they become guilty of an eternal sin which has no forgiveness.

Apparently this session was interrupted by the announcement of those who sat around Jesus that his mother and brothers were outside and were asking for him. Jesus asked them who were his mother or his brethren; then, looking around on those who sat in a circle, he said, "Behold my mother and my brethren!" To their amazement, no doubt,

he explained that whoever does the will of God is his brother and sister and mother. Thus Jesus laid down the terms of spiritual kinship, and by the same token shows how to become members of his family.

SUGGESTIVE

This section, in which so much of the evil of human nature flares up, is full of suggestive material for practical living; the majestic deity of Jesus supplies subject matter for worshipful reflection and meditation; let us look at both angles. Sabbath observance continues to be one of the most pressing questions of our day. In fact, the manner of its observance is such that many thoughtful people among us are ready to say that as a spiritual institution the sabbath has about passed and has become the greatest day of the week for recreation, social activities, dissipation, and vicious practices of all kinds. The evidence in support of this view is sufficient to call all Christians to careful and prayerful consideration of the perils around the observance of the Lord's Day. I do not see how we can survive as a Christian people without the Christian sabbath. Maybe too long we have stressed the negative side of sabbath observance; certainly it is in order to stress the Master's teachings. It is lawful to do good on the sabbath. This would seem to make the sabbath, in part at least, a day of activity as well as a day of rest. It ought to be the day of all the week for growth in grace, by worship, prayer, meditation, Bible study, and ministry in the name of our Lord. Such activities would soon crowd out the excesses and abuses which profane the day.

Prejudice is one of the ugliest attributes of a human being; it is entirely out of place in the Christian. Literally it

JESUS MATCHES WITS WITH CRITICS

means judgment or opinion before there is any evidence upon which to base it. It manifests itself everywhere. It is common to make up our minds that we are not going to like certain people even before we meet them; it is just as easy to decide that we are going to like everybody. Will Rogers made the remarkable statement that he never met a man that he didn't like. Of course he did not mean that in his extensive travels and enormous range of acquaintances he never met any but likable men. Not at all! But he did mean that his mind was already made up to like every man that he met, and he did. This principle properly applied will extinguish such ugly and threatening fires as race prejudice, class prejudice, national prejudice, and so on, and will go a long way toward demonstrating that a man can be a Christian under all circumstances.

In spite of all our theorizing and academic reasoning, it is exceedingly difficult to grasp and to practice the Christian idea of the worth of humanity. The terrible war which curses the world today is an illustration of that fact. Humanity did not have much chance at the time of the launching of this unspeakable assault. In our individual conceptions of the worth of one person we must keep before us constantly the Master's estimate. To him life—any life—is sacred. To his way of thinking the most bedraggled remnant of humanity on this earth is worth his sacrificial death. Such thoughts give us pause and compel us to recognize the sacredness, the eternal value, of human life. This conception kept constantly before us will revolutionize our relations with our fellow men.

JESUS TEACHES IN PARABLES

Mark 4:1-34

THE KINGDOM OF GOD COMETH NOT WITH OBSERVATION

PARABOLIC TEACHING

Meaning and Use
Reveals Truth
Conceals Mystery

UNCONSCIOUS GROWTH—4:26-29

Man's Sowing
Earth's Production
Harvest Utilized

FIRST FULL PARABLE—4:1-20

The Seaside Scene
Parable of Hearer
Parable Interpreted

SURE GROWTH—4:30-34

Small Beginning
Great Proportions
Wide Usefulness

RESPONSIBILITY OF HEARING—4:21-25

Use of Light
Reciprocal Measure
Rule of Use

SUGGESTIVE

The Unseen Power
Human Agency
Kingdom Extension

GROWTH IS A FUNDAMENTAL LAW OF THE KINGDOM

In an effort to catch the thought of these thirty-four verses, I have compressed into two sentences—the emphasis lines of our outline—two obvious truths which are equally obviously related to each other. The kingdom of God comes not with observation. Jesus illustrates this fact many times, and always with the same emphasis. The kingdom comes, like the great growths in nature, quietly, gradually, unostentatiously. We cannot see its growth, but we can see

JESUS TEACHES IN PARABLES

the effects of its growth. It is nonsense, therefore, to try to hasten the growth of the kingdom by noise and clamor and claptrap. Like all powerful growths, it comes not with observation.

A corollary to this general truth is equally obvious: Growth is a fundamental law of the kingdom. It does not stand still; it cannot stand still. The same truth applies to the individual of the kingdom. Christian growth is both fundamental and imperative. The consequences of failure to grow on the part of the Christian are distressing to contemplate. There are too many stunted Christians, too many Christians of arrested growth, too many Christians whose lives are fruitless—all because they do not grow.

PARABOLIC TEACHING

Parabolic teaching is so universally associated with Jesus that it is not unnatural for us to think that he originated the method. This, of course, is not true. Parables have been favorites of all great teachers. The Old Testament has many beautiful parables; the Talmud and sermonic literature of all ages contain parables; secular writers employ the parable in many of its forms. The parable, therefore, did not originate with Jesus, but he used it with such effect that whenever it is mentioned we unconsciously think of Jesus.

It is difficult to count the parables of Jesus because of lack of agreement as to the definition of a parable. If, as some say, a parable is almost any short, pithy saying, there are scores of them in the Gospels. Somehow this conception of a parable does not appeal to me. The word itself means something "placed alongside" for measurement or comparison, like a yardstick; it is of course a concrete illustration of spiritual or moral truth. Broadus defines a parable as "a

narrative illustration not involving a comparison." The colloquial definition, "an earthly story with a heavenly meaning," is pretty good for practical purposes. The metaphor, of course, is present in all parables, even as it is in nearly all figures of speech; the allegory, such as *Pilgrim's Progress*, or the story of the prodigal son, is a self-explanatory parable, but not all parables are allegories. The parable can always be actual fact; in contrast, the fable represents things as they are not in nature. Perhaps no other form of literature gets attention as readily and holds it as long as the parable.

There are many differences of opinion as to the interpretation of parables. Some take the extreme view that practically every thing and every person mentioned in a parable has some special significance. I lean to what might be called the practical or sensible interpretation. With rare exceptions which Jesus himself clarified, the parables of Jesus illustrate one central truth which the hearer can readily grasp, and the details of the story are only incidental to the main emphasis. It helps us to remember that these parables were spoken to plain people whose childlike minds were open without question to great truths. They were spoken to be understood by those who were willing to take in their truths. Always the parable reveals great truths. The story method is of course closely akin to the parable, and most of us can recall the rapt attention given to the story told by some loved one or friend. I can also remember that my only comment at the end of a story was "Talk it more." That is merely a child's appreciation of the beauty of a masterpiece as a whole, without analysis or learned interpretation. I wish that we might revive an old practice of oral recitation

of the parables, leaving to the hearer the application; not often would the point be lost.

The parable has another virtue which Jesus used to good advantage. The parable conceals the truth from those who lack the power of spiritual discernment, or who are too sophisticated or opinionated to recognize greatness in simplicity. Reference is made frequently in the Gospels to revelation to babes. This, of course, does not necessarily mean infants in the flesh, but it does mean those whose minds are sufficiently free from the rubbish of intellectual vanity to enable them to accept with confidence the great truths of life. One of these days we are going to learn from biography and history the great fact that the most powerful minds the world has known have been and are the simplest, humblest, most childlike.

FIRST FULL PARABLE—4:1-20

The parable which we call the parable of the sower, and which could more appropriately be called the parable of the soil or the parable of the hearer, is the first of the full parables and also the first parable that Jesus himself interpreted. It deserves, therefore, our most careful consideration. The setting is a beautiful seaside scene—Jesus was crowded by the multitudes from the beach into a boat, in which he sat and taught. The clause “sat in the sea” is characteristically vivid, and of course is easily understood. The multitudes who made up his audience sat on the land by the sea. This is a most fascinating picture, easily visualized. He taught them many things by parables. The inference is justified that he used many more parables than are recorded.

“Hearken,” the word at the beginning of our parable, is

considered by some an effort on the part of Jesus to get the people to listen to him. With all due respect, I do not believe this is correct. The crowd that had forced Jesus to take to a boat and push out from the shore would certainly be in a listening frame of mind. I feel that this word was used for emphasis to indicate, maybe, that what he was about to say was most important. Speakers have those little tricks or mannerisms, and no one misunderstands. Some of our readers will remember that S. D. Gordon, right in the middle of his message when the attention was almost painful, had the habit of saying, "Are you listening?" He knew they were listening; his question only served to cause the hearer to admit that he was listening.

"Behold, there went out a sower to sow." The very clumsiness of the King James English carries strength. Not many of our readers have ever seen a sower sow; the sower uses a drill now. We can imagine that the sower could be seen across the lake by the audience. We can see him with his grain-container around his neck and opened in pouch-like fashion at his waist. With almost stately tread the sower measures by his step the distance and density of the sowing, as with his hand he scatters the grain. His is a work of art as well as of agricultural accuracy.

It came to pass, as he sowed, that some grain fell on the path or on the road around the field, and the birds came and ate it. Some fell on stony ground where there was not much earth, and it sprang up quickly without taking root, and when the sun came up it was scorched and withered away because it had no depth of earth. Some fell among thorns, and they grew up and choked it so there was no fruit. Other seed fell on good ground and yielded fruit that increased as it grew—"some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hun-

dred." Jesus closed the parable with a sentence that he used often, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." I have never been satisfied as to his motive for using these words. It seems as though he were saying, "Now, if your ears are not mere ornaments but are to hear with, use them." This may be entirely wrong.

When the Master was alone with only the disciples about him, they asked him the parable. Before replying directly, Jesus told them that it was given to them to know the mystery of the kingdom, but for them who were without, these things were done in parables that they might not perceive, hear, nor understand, lest they should be converted and their sins be forgiven them. It seems to me that the last clause contains a bit of irony along with the sure penalty upon those who will not see. After this preliminary statement, Jesus wanted to know how the disciples expected to know all parables if they did not understand this one. Then he gave a marvelously clear interpretation of the parable. The seed which the sower sows is the word. The wayside ground represents the hearers from whose hearts Satan immediately takes the word away. The stony-ground hearers are those who receive the word with gladness as soon as they have heard it but, having no root in themselves, endure for a time only, till they become offended because of affliction or persecution for the word's sake. The thorny-ground hearers are those who permit the cares of the world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things to choke the word so that it becomes unfruitful. The hearers represented by the good ground receive the word and bring forth abundant fruit. How wonderful the interpretation, and how modern the parable!

RESPONSIBILITY OF HEARING—4:21-25

Following this perfectly marvelous interpretation, Jesus had a further word to say about the responsibility of hearing. Drawing his illustration from a humble one-room house, Jesus remarked in questions expecting a negative answer that a candle would not be put under a bushel, or under a bed, but on a candlestick or stand. Then he declared that nothing is hid except for future manifestation, nor was anything kept secret except that it should be revealed in due time. This paragraph is concluded with a substantial repetition of verse 9, except that a condition is substituted for the relative clause; but the meaning is substantially the same, and equally puzzling.

Turning from these more or less obscure words, Jesus issues a positive command that his disciples take heed what they hear, warning them that the measure which they mete to others shall be returned to them and more. Well, it would be wonderful if we did not hear so much, particularly so much that is not true. I heard a distinguished speaker the other day say from the platform that there isn't much to see in a little town, but what you hear makes up for it. That is undoubtedly true; gossip flourishes in the small town and in the neighborhoods of the larger towns. The only thing to do with gossip is to kill it by refusing to pass it on.

The practical nature of the Master's teaching is further illustrated by his statement of the law of use, in the form of a paradox which admits of wide application. "He that hath, to him shall be given." That is almost a rule, surely a principle of life. The man who has expended the labor, exercised the thrift and economy, and practiced the self-denial necessary to get ahead always finds it easier to acquire more.

That is the positive side of Jesus' system of economics. The negative side is just as sensible. "He that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath." As strange as this sounds as an economic theory, it is absolutely true in every other realm. Failure to use any faculty or opportunity means the loss of that very thing. It is not taken away arbitrarily; it has passed out for lack of use. The man who does not keep on acquiring soon loses that which he thinks he has already. Historians justify our treatment of the Indians on the ground that the Indian forfeited by non-use what he thought was his own. Regardless of our ability or inability to interpret the paradox, it stimulates thought and, along with the other words of the paragraph, puts the responsibility where the individual has a chance to do something about it.

UNCONSCIOUS GROWTH—4:26-29

In these verses we have one of the most beautiful parables in the Gospels; it is found only in Mark, and is another illustration of our special debt to this Gospel. Sermons have been preached and books written on the kingdom of God; but Jesus, who knew all about it, contented himself by giving a few simple analogies which he knew men would understand. We would do well to try to imitate Jesus and thus avoid much waste of time, to say nothing of the flow of meaningless words which could be turned to more profitable channels. I am happy to drink in the simple words of Jesus, and I find myself exhausting my thought capacity as I attempt to sound the depths of his teaching.

"So is the kingdom of God," says Jesus. Elsewhere the more common phrasing is, "The kingdom of God is like." In describing the kingdom here, the Master uses a sup-

possible case—in fact, a very common case of a man casting seed into the ground. Every hearer would understand that, and every hearer would know that that was about all the man could do toward the production of a harvest of grain. The farmer knows better than anyone man's dependence upon God, because the farmer can only wait while the forces of nature do their work. Jesus says the farmer goes on about his regular activities: he sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed springs up and grows, and he does not know how it grows. I like the order of these words in the original Greek, "How knows not he." And that is the simple truth. With all our scientific advance we can recognize growth, but we can't explain it. One of the most forceful illustrations of growth was impressed upon me in my days as a high school teacher. In front of the school grounds was a concrete pavement over which I walked every morning. One morning I noticed evidence of a slight crack in the pavement. My curiosity was aroused as this opening seemed to become larger from morning to morning, until finally I saw a sprig of green forcing itself through the pavement into the sunlight. That has remained to me a perfect picture of the sheer power of growth. Of course every grain of wheat in the field illustrates the same truth.

Continuing his story, the Master says the earth brings forth the fruit of herself, that is, automatically—the Greek word translated "of herself" is the word from which we derive "automatic." Man has merely deposited the seed; the earth receives the seed, works on it, and makes it germinate into fruit—"first the blade, then the ear; after that, the full corn in the ear." To quote Dr. Robertson, "So we sow the seed, God's kingdom truth, and the soil (the soul) is ready for the seed. The Holy Spirit works on the heart and

uses the seed sown and makes it germinate and grow. . . . This is the law and order of nature and also of grace in the kingdom of God. Hence it is worth while to preach and teach." The preacher and the teacher can only sow the seed; but they can do that, and if they fail in that they fail utterly.

When the fruit is brought forth, or is ripe, or permits—note that all this is outside the power of man—immediately man sends forth the reapers with their sickles, because the harvest has come. In this whole process man has merely prepared the ground and sowed the seed, while nature has supplied the important steps of growth and leaves it to man to reap the harvest. It is too bad to contemplate the fact that many of our people have no familiarity with these processes of nature. Teachers will do their best to supply the deficiency.

SURE GROWTH—4:30-34

The next parable is a favorite of the Synoptists; it would seem that the use of the mustard seed to represent smallness was proverbial. For the purpose doubtless of both quickening and holding interest, Jesus introduced this story with two questions, and apparently included his hearers in them. Whereunto shall *we* liken the kingdom of God? With what comparison shall *we* compare it? It is possible that "we" is editorial, but I incline to the view expressed. Of course he expected no answer, but proceeded to say that it is like a grain—one grain—of mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that are in the earth. The mustard seed was not literally the smallest seed. The whole story which Jesus is using is figurative; we will certainly permit him to use hyperbole here to make emphatic

the point of the story, namely, that from a very small seed a towering plant grows. I do not believe any hearer was deceived by this exaggeration, nor do I think that the intelligent reader is disturbed by it.

After this seed is planted, it grows up and becomes larger than all herbs. It puts forth great branches so that the birds may lodge under the shadow of it. Matthew and Luke both say that the mustard seed grows into a tree, and that the birds lodge in the branches of it. Of course there is no contradiction here; the emphasis is the same: nature, quietly and without observation, has produced a plant of wide usefulness from a tiny beginning. This is an admirable illustration of growth in grace, which could be used with profit by all of us.

Mark concludes this study with the observation that Jesus spoke the word unto the people with as many such parables as they were able to hear. This statement is significant in itself. The Master, of course, was speaking to the masses, most of whom were unlearned and therefore not acquainted with the technique of teaching, nor were their thought processes very active and functioning. It is not surprising therefore, that through weariness or lack of understanding they became unable to hear some of the parables which Jesus desired to speak. Teaching, of course, is an art; any teacher can tell when he loses his class, and ought to have judgment enough to discontinue. The class may be fresher next time.

The Master's use of the parable should prompt all of us to give more attention to the art of telling a story. Mark says that without a parable Jesus did not speak unto them. I wish we had the full record of all these parables. I wish also that we could have enjoyed one of those private sessions

with the disciples when they raised questions concerning what he had said to the public and he gave them the exposition of all that he had said.

SUGGESTIVE

Of course it is a truism that the unseen powers are the mighty forces of the material universe. We can see only the effects of the wind; no one has yet seen the wind. We can enjoy the radio, but no one of us would claim to see the ether waves, and few of us would attempt to explain how it is possible for the human voice to be projected through space. We accept as a part of our daily living the power of electricity, but not many of us would claim familiarity with the current. We stand amazed before the mighty manifestations of power through the harnessing of the forces of nature, and we are entirely bewildered in any effort to fathom the mysteries of that power.

Yes, we are familiar with and accept unseen power in the realm of nature; the whole point of this passage is that we must recognize the unseen in all spiritual processes and activities. This is a good time to resolve to give our spiritual natures a chance, to become intelligent spiritually. Surely, this is the supreme need in our Christian living. The multiplication of spiritual dwarfs among us does no credit to our recognition of spiritual realities and to our appreciation of how they are grown.

I have seen what seemed to be forced growth in spiritual development. Let no one misunderstand me, but it is well for us to appreciate the place of human agency in spiritual growth, and to keep the human in its place. The human agent can have a large part in the preparation of the soil, and can provide a congenial environment in which the

spiritual nature may grow; but man's fundamental business is to sow the seed. It is not always easy for us to remember this. We grow impatient for the harvest, and sometimes maybe resort to artificial means to produce the appearance of a harvest when there has been little or no sowing. We can't reverse the processes of nature, neither can we modify the stages of growth. "I have planted," said Paul (I Cor. 3:6), "Apollos watered; but God gave the increase." God must give the increase, and God will give it through the faithful sowing of the word.

Kingdom extension does not come like any other form of expansion. When men conceive that it is necessary or wise to enlarge or to expand any human movement, they meet, confer, plan, organize, and work. This procedure is perfectly proper and always gets results. It is altogether human for men to behave the same way about the extension of the kingdom, and sometimes they do. This is one reason why I object to artificial stimuli and man-devised contrivances in doing the Lord's work. "My word shall not return unto me void," said the Lord through his great prophet (Isa. 55:11). It is the easiest thing in the world to preach or to teach something else besides the Word of God; but there is no promise to the Christian that such sowing shall produce a harvest of which either God or man can be proud.

The call of this section is to understand the kingdom, how it grows, and to give ourselves with unreserved consecration to the tasks assigned to us, leaving to God in utmost faith and assurance to perform what he delights to do. The result will be spiritual growth on the part of the individual, and kingdom expansion generally.

JESUS USES HIS POWER TO HELP

Mark 4:35-5:43

WITH CHRIST ON BOARD EVERY STORM MAY BE DEFIED

STORM IN THE NIGHT—4:35-41

The Silent Fleet
The Sudden Terror
The Calm Christ

A RULER'S PLEA—5:21-34

Honest Statement
Pitiful Interruption
Virtue Released

A FRIGHTFUL ENCOUNTER—5:1-10

The Terribly Afflicted
The Act of Worship
The Mysterious Dialogue

DESPAIR AND DEATH YIELD—5:35-43

Hopeless Report
Quiet Assurance
Faith Rewarded

MASTERY OF SPIRIT—5:11-20

Request Granted
Spectacular Miracle
Dual Commission

SUGGESTIVE

In Life's Storms
Sorrow's Blessings
The Sensitive Christ

HUMAN FAITH RELEASES INSTANTLY DIVINE POWER

The student of the life of Jesus, particularly of his deeds, finds himself saying repeatedly that this passage is the best. I have that experience, and to me the section before us is just about the sweetest in the whole list. Jesus is so much like Jesus all the way through. It is a study of action, but throughout is a spiritual experience which is ennobling and inspiring. I enter upon the study of it with even more enthusiasm than usual.

The emphasis lines contain truths precious to every

Christian. Some of us are called upon to sail pretty rough seas, but we thank God that with Christ on board every storm may be defied. This truth is invaluable in these stormy times and should be hugged close to the heart of every Christian. The truth of the lower emphasis line is as challenging as it is true. That human faith can release instantly the power of God is an astounding fact, and yet it is taught all through this section. You will want to join me in the question, How does it come that we have so little power? The answer is inescapable—we simply do not use even the faith that we have. That being true, we do not ask God to increase our faith. Faith, like everything else, grows with use. Let's give our Lord a chance with our lives as together we study this incomparable passage.

STORM IN THE NIGHT—4:35-41

I like the way this paragraph begins. It was the same day—that day of accusation, of misunderstanding, of crowds, of parables, that strenuously busy day—and now the evening had come, and with it had come the thought of a little rest apart from the throngs. Of course we know nothing of such busy days as Jesus spent; but even we can appreciate the welcome coming of the evening time. With thoughts of relaxation in mind, Jesus suggested to the disciples that they go across the sea from the western to the eastern shore. Nothing could be more restful and refreshing to the tired Master than this quiet ride across blue Galilee. Of course the Master's wish was law for the disciples, and they proceeded to carry it out. First they sent the people away; then they took Jesus just as he was into the boat. Mark adds that other little boats accompanied the Master's boat, so that he was denied even upon the bosom of the sea the quiet which

he sought. After all, there is something very beautiful in the fact that many of the people wanted so badly to be near Jesus that they entered boats and pulled alongside his boat. Can you not visualize this silent fleet making its way across the lake, with only the occasional splash of the water to disturb the peacefulness of the scene? Jesus was so thoroughly exhausted that he went to the stern of the boat, lay down on a pillow or cushion, and went to sleep. Maybe you know a more beautiful scene than this; I do not.

This peaceful scene was not to last long. The Sea of Galilee is famous for its sudden storms. Located 682 feet below the Mediterranean Sea, its hot air draws the storm with sudden power from Mount Hermon down into the valley. Undoubtedly the disciples were familiar with these violent upheavals, these cyclonic storms; but this one seemed unusually severe. The waves were beating and rolling over the sides of the boat so vigorously that it was full. The disciples, at home on the sea, were panic-stricken, rushed to the back of the boat, and aroused Jesus with words mingled with distress, petulance, and rebuke. "Master," they said, "we are perishing; don't you care?" There is no reason to suppose that they were expecting him to do anything about the storm; his apparent indifference to their peril peeved them, which accounts for the implied rebuke in their tone and words. When we come to think about it, their reactions were perfectly natural. You see, they didn't know Jesus as we know him, and therefore could not know how very much he cared.

It is wonderful to note the behavior of the Christ upon thus being suddenly aroused from deep sleep. He did not answer their question; in fact, he paid no attention to them at all. He just got up, rebuked the wind, and told the sea to

be still. How magnificent is the strength of the calm Christ! Then he turned to the disciples and asked them why they were afraid. Sure enough, why were they? They belonged to the Master, and he owned and controlled the wind and the waves as well as the boat in which they were. Well, we can't press this question too far without embarrassing ourselves terribly. They made no reply to this question, and he followed it with another, "How is it that ye have no faith?" That was their trouble. They actually had some faith—enough perhaps to enable them to accept him as the Messiah—but they were still babes in Christ whom experience must teach. It seems that they were more afraid after the storm had been stilled than they were before. The former fear was largely physical; now this fear has taken on something of the quality of reverence. "They feared exceedingly," or, as Dr. Robertson translates it, "They feared a great fear," and they talked one to another, marveling at the man whom even the wind and the sea obeyed. This comes close to being a majestic scene.

A FRIGHTFUL ENCOUNTER—5:1-10

Having made the trip across the sea safely, they came into the country of the Gadarenes or of the Gerasenes. The two words need not confuse when we remember that Gerasa is a village in the district of Gadara; these references, therefore, easily refer to the same people. When Jesus came out of the boat, he was met by possibly the most pitiful object in his earthly experience. Here was a poor fellow afflicted with an evil spirit, so violent that he resisted the efforts of men to confine him, breaking in pieces the fetters and chains with which they sought to bind him, and made his habitation among the tombs. Here, night and day, he

roamed the hills, crying out and gashing himself with stones; and no man had strength enough to tame him. This pitiable figure, dirty, filthy, almost toothless, hair and beard matted, covered with scars made by self-inflicted gashes, with broken fragments of cords and chains hanging from wrists and ankles, ran to Jesus. Can you visualize the scene? Try to imagine the feelings of the disciples so lately delivered from fear as they saw this screaming madman approach Jesus.

I have less difficulty in imagining their feelings than in understanding what followed. The demoniac actually worshiped Jesus, calling him the "Son of the most high God," even as the demons were accustomed to greet him (Mark 3:11). After the customary outcry (see Mark 1:24), the demon seems to have put Jesus under oath to torment him not, for Jesus had been ordering him to come out of the man. Just why the evil spirit had not obeyed we do not know.

Now follows one of the strangest conversations in the Gospels. Again I confess my ignorance; I shall be content merely to report what the record says. Jesus asked the unclean spirit what his name was, and he replied that his name was "Legion; for we are many." Note the shift from the singular to the plural pronoun, and note also the surface meaning of the reply. The presumption is that reference is made to the Roman legion, the famous military formation with which Roman armies conquered the world. The full legion consisted of 6,826 men; the herd of swine into which the demons were later cast numbered about two thousand. I do not see that it is necessary to insist upon the literal here; we use the word "legion" to denote a great many; maybe the demon used it in that sense. The demon pleaded with Jesus—"besought him much"—not to send them out of the

country, and presumably back to their real home, the abyss of torment.

MASTERY OF SPIRIT—5:11-20

A compromise presented itself. Near the mountain a great herd of swine, numbering about two thousand, was feeding, and all the devils together this time begged Jesus to give them permission to enter into the hogs. "Forthwith Jesus gave them leave." Why? I do not know, and I refrain from speculative comment. The unclean spirits promptly entered into the hogs, and the entire herd ran violently down the steep hill into the sea, and "were choked in the sea." I do not agree with most commentators that these last words, "picture graphically the disappearance of pig after pig in the sea" (Robertson). Rather do they mean, I think, that in the downward rush the hogs jammed one another in the sea, an idea no less graphic.

No more spectacular miracle was ever performed by Jesus. I still marvel at the enormity of its proportions. The keepers of the swine very naturally fled into the city and reported there and in the country what had taken place. Of course everybody rushed to the scene of the miracle to see what had been done. "They come to Jesus." I believe these were the owners of the hogs, prepared to demand some kind of settlement for the loss of property they had sustained at the hands of Jesus. Before they could push their personal matter, they saw the madman sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed—perhaps the first time that they had seen him dressed—and in his right mind. The sight of the man was more terrifying than the loss of swine; and as witnesses of the miracle proceeded to tell them all about the happenings of the day, they decided to say nothing about their loss and

began to beg Jesus to leave their neighborhood. Financial beneficiaries of the liquor business, which cannot exist without destroying life, are in no position to cast stones at these property owners because they did not rejoice that it had been their privilege to lose a few hogs in the complete restoration to sanity and decency of their most conspicuous citizen. I believe they had a better case than we have. God have mercy upon the shortsightedness and sin of people whose estimate of the worth of human beings is so low.

Jesus was returning to the boat when the healed man, still friendless, with a kind of doglike gratitude and devotion asked that he might be with Jesus. We can understand him, and Jesus was not unsympathetic, but he had definite work for this new friend to do. He told him to go back to his own folks—not friends—and tell them how Jesus had had compassion on him and what great things Jesus had done for him. Here was a worthy assignment, and here was a capable witness. We cannot but notice that in this case Jesus did not impose silence as he had done in other cases in which demons had been cast out; he sought the enthusiastic testimony which this redeemed man would give. And he was not disappointed, for the healed man went his way, publishing or heralding his story throughout Decapolis. Men could not but see that this one whom they had known as a violent demoniac was now a new man, and they marveled, and kept on marveling.

A RULER'S PLEA—5:21-34

The Master and his disciples obeyed the urgent request of the leaders in Decapolis and recrossed the sea to the other side. It is a sad thing that several cities in which Jesus lived and served drove him out and shut their gates on him. Sure-

ly we would have done better. But would we? To all intents and purposes many of our communities are closed to him now. It is always tragic when an individual refuses to open the door of his heart to Jesus, and yet many do that very thing. Jesus, the marvelous gentleman, crashes no doors. Try to imagine the Master's thoughts and feelings as he turned away. He had permanently blessed a whole community and had made himself available for their every need. But—they would not! He must have turned away with poignant sadness.

He was not left long to his own reflections, for much people gathered on the beach on the other side. Among those who had come was Jairus, one of the rulers of the synagogue. I love the sincere, dignified approach of this cultured gentleman. You know, courtesy and consideration and graciousness are very becoming graces, and it is always a pleasure to see them in action. This distinguished citizen was greatly burdened on account of the illness of his little girl. He fell at the feet of Jesus and earnestly entreated him in behalf of the precious child who lay at the point of death. He begged Jesus to come and lay his hands on her that she might be healed and live. This is an excellent illustration of believing faith. Jesus responded at once, and went off with him promptly—and a multitude followed him, pressing upon him so that he could hardly move. Have you ever been to Coney Island on the Fourth of July? If you have, you know something of the press of the throngs, which makes impossible movement independent of the multitude. So Jesus must have been pressed upon in the narrow streets.

As they made their way, they met with a sudden and rather pitiful interruption. An afflicted woman, suffering from a chronic disease of twelve years' duration, who had

endured much at the hands of the physicians of her day and had spent all that she had in her search for health, without improvement, in fact with only the result that her condition grew steadily worse, heard that Jesus was passing. Some feel called upon to say a word in defense of doctors here. The record speaks for itself. If the doctors knew that they could not heal her, they could at least have had the honesty to decline to take her money. But here she was gradually getting worse, her money gone, and apparently only one hope for relief. In beautiful faith she had said to herself that if she could only touch his clothes she would be made whole. Prolonged affliction or disease inevitably makes one sensitive. Those of us who are well and robust have difficulty in sympathizing with such unfortunates. Timidly, even shrinkingly, she pushed through the crowd behind Jesus and touched the hem of his outer garment. Straightway her hemorrhage was dried up, and she realized that she was healed of the scourge which she thought God had sent upon her—a most remarkable case of unconscious healing by the simple exercise of faith.

As soon as Jesus felt that healing power had been released from him, he turned about in the milling throng and wanted to know who had touched him on his clothes. The disciples thought such a question a very foolish one, since so many people were pressing all around Jesus, and they could not resist the urge to tell him so. It is difficult for most of us to learn the virtue of silence, isn't it? Jesus ignored their contribution to the solution of his difficulty and looked around about to discover the answer to his question. As someone has said, "Jesus knew the difference between touch and touch." Notice how Mark's participles describe the condition of the healed woman. "Fearing," "trembling," "know-

ing," she came forward, fell down before him, and told him all that had taken place, including undoubtedly the pitiful story of her suffering, of her efforts to obtain relief, and finally of her miraculous healing in response to her touch of faith. Jesus was so gentle and gracious in his manner toward her. Addressing her affectionately as "daughter," he told her that her faith had made her whole and bade her go in peace in health of body and soul.

DESPAIR AND DEATH YIELD—5:35-43

We sympathize deeply with the grief-stricken father who stood by anxiously but cautiously—for he was merely a suppliant and had no more claim on Jesus than anyone else—this suffering woman, for instance—while the minutes of delay seemed to stretch into hours. Jesus had not finished speaking to the woman when messengers came from the ruler's house announcing that the little girl had died. Fateful words, aren't they? Somehow we can stand such expressions as "dangerously sick" or "sick unto death," but "dead" is such a final word. Only those who know can understand how this father felt. The messengers volunteered the counsel that it was no use to trouble Jesus further about the little girl. Despair settled down over the father and those closest to him. They did not know Jesus as we know him.

The Master heard what was said and came at once to the relief of the bereaved father with these reassuring words so characteristic of Jesus, "Be not afraid, only believe." Marvelous words of inestimable value to the thousands who have tried them! Incidentally, we may observe that only Jesus can give freedom from fear. In most thorough but casual way, Jesus made ready for the task ahead of him. He took the members of his Inner Circle, Peter, James, and

John, with him, permitting no one else to accompany them, and proceeded on his way to the ruler's house. As they drew near to the house, they saw the uproar and heard the weeping and monotonous wailing of the hired mourners. When he entered the house, he asked them what all the noise was about, saying, "The damsel is not dead, but sleepeth." Observe the gentle, soft, reassuring word that Jesus uses of death. Sleep is complete rest and implies the awakening time. Of course the mourners made fun of him, they knew a dead person when they saw one.

Jesus now took charge. He put this professional crew out; then he asked the father and mother to accompany him and the three disciples into the death chamber. These six went in where the little girl—she was twelve years old—lay. Confidently Jesus approached the couch on which she lay, gently took her by the hand, and said unto her, "Damsel, I say unto thee, arise." Straightway—Mark finds this word most expressive—she arose and walked, and Jesus told them to give her something to eat. They who had witnessed the miracle were amazed even to the point of ecstasy, and undoubtedly gave expression to their astonishment. Was this a miracle? Well, we have no reason to doubt it. Certainly it was if the young girl was dead, and the evidence on that point is very clear. She was at the point of death when the father came to Jesus; later the messengers reported her death; and still later the hired mourners took charge. Such facts, if found outside the Bible, would be accepted as trustworthy and credible; I see no reason to discredit evidence just because it is found in the Bible. By his miraculous power Jesus raised her from the dead, to the great delight of her parents and to the strengthening of the faith of the three disciples.

SUGGESTIVE

This entire passage is a splendid illustration of the fact that men and women all about us are in life's storms. These storms are of different kinds, but each of them is very real and very severe to the man who must weather them. We may recall that at the conclusion of what we call the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus used a very strong "therefore," saying, "Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock." In these graphic words the Master announced that certain things are predictable in the lives of all of us. Rain of discouragement, of perplexity, of bewilderment, all kinds of rain will descend; floods of temptation, of anxiety, of struggle, all kinds of floods will come; winds of adversity, of distress, or sorrow, all kinds of winds will blow; sometimes all three combined hit the life. The only security is to ground the life on the foundation which is Jesus Christ; all other foundations are sinking sand.

It is very easy, particularly for those who have had no sorrow, to say that sorrow may be a blessing. I am not a stranger to sorrow, and I say that sorrow may always be a blessing if accepted in the right light. This is not saying that it is always a blessing. Jairus would undoubtedly say that sorrow brought the greatest blessing that ever came to his house. We answer readily that that is easy because his little girl whose death he mourned was brought to life by Jesus. How about those whose loved ones still sleep? Well, there are many who will testify triumphantly that sorrow is

JESUS USES HIS POWER TO HELP

the greatest blessing that ever came into their lives. Sorrow made God real, forced the acknowledgment of dependence upon God, redeemed heaven from a hazy fiction to a blessed reality, and gave new zest to living. Yes, rightly accepted sorrow carries in its train a great multitude of substantial blessings.

We can't give much thought to this section without being profoundly impressed with the sensitiveness of Jesus to human distress and suffering. The terror-stricken disciples, the maniacal outcast of the caves and hills, the helpless woman in the throng, the substantial but grief-stricken father—all these drew from Jesus his sympathetic consideration and his healing touch. The Jesus who turned only a sensitive ear to the needs of all classes of humanity is the Christ whom we worship and trust. The only limitation placed on his power today is our lack of faith. With the testimony of nineteen centuries of Christian experience before us, our faith ought to be stronger than that which drew such blessings from the Master while he was on earth. In closing this study I cannot do better than quote for their practical value the great words of Jesus, "Be not afraid, only believe"; these are at once our strength and our challenge.

JESUS FEEDS THE MULTITUDE

Mark 6:1-9:1

IT IS NEVER NECESSARY TO LEAVE JESUS

CONNECTING LINKS—6:1-29

Prophet Among Own
Twelve Sent Out
Herod and John

BEYOND BORDERS—7:24-37

A Mother's Plea
Saving Faith
Defective Healed

A LONG, BUSY DAY—6:30-56

Multitudes Fed
Master of Storm
The Throngs Healed

MULTITUDE FED—8:1-9

Long Fasting
Provision for Food
The People Fed

TRADITION OR SPIRIT?—7:1-23

Unwashed Hands
Traditional Practices
Defilement Explained

IMPORTANT STATEMENTS—8:10-9:1

Puzzled Disciples
Peter's Declaration
True Discipleship

EXTREME NEED OFTEN MAKES FAITH REAL

In this study I am attempting to give a sketch of three chapters. The thoughts of the emphasis lines run through these chapters. It is always a mistake to run away from Jesus or to send others away from him; he improves and blesses every situation. Then, in these days of stress and strain, it helps to remember that the very seriousness of our condition ought to revive and quicken our faith in God. How

vividly Rickenbacker and his companions illustrate that truth.

CONNECTING LINKS—6:1-29

There is something almost pathetically human about Jesus' affection for his own country. In spite of the unkind reception on the occasion of his former visit, this study opens with Jesus in the familiar haunts of his Nazareth. On the sabbath he met the citizens in the synagogue, and as was his custom he began to teach. Unfortunately the people could only express astonishment at his wisdom, and wonder where he got such knowledge and how he could perform such mighty works. They were not interested in his sayings and his deeds; they were chiefly concerned to convince one another that his ministry did not merit consideration because he was their former carpenter, the son of their townswoman, and the brother of their friends. They knew too much to believe on Jesus. In their intellectual conceit, their mental vanity, men refuse to accept the simple teachings of Jesus. Jesus marveled at the unbelief of those from whom he had every reason to expect faith; I wonder what he thinks of our feeble faith in the face of the light that is ours.

It is proper now to think of the disciples as apostles, or those who have been sent forth. Arranging them in groups of two, Jesus gave them special power, and then issued definite commands for their mission, concerning every detail of their equipment and conduct. They went in his strength; they proclaimed the gospel that he had taught; they exercised power over evil spirits and healed many that were sick; they reported faithfully to Jesus everything that they had done and said.

The fame of Jesus finally reached the royal palace, about

the last place affected by religious news, and Herod himself became very much concerned. His accusing conscience convinced him that Jesus was John the Baptist come back from the dead. This reference to Herod's conscience calls for some explanation and prepares the way for the story of the murder of John the Baptist, which is related vividly. The fearless preacher of righteousness would naturally clash with the practices of a corrupt court; and in the case of Herod, John felt the necessity of rebuking him publicly for his unlawful cohabitation with his brother's wife. Such rebuke won for John imprisonment at the hands of Herod and bitter hatred in the heart of Herodias, who sought a convenient time for vengeance. The hatred of a scorned woman neither slumbers nor sleeps.

In the course of time Herod celebrated his birthday with a dinner to his lords and other officials. During the dinner Salome, the daughter of Herodias, danced before Herod and his guests, and so pleased them that Herod in a moment of mad intoxication told the dancer he would give her anything she would ask, even to the half of his kingdom. This was the mother's opportunity. When the flattered girl sought her mother's advice, the mother told her to request the head of John the Baptist. Herod, regretting deeply his foolish promise, but typical of that group of weak men who insist upon keeping their vows regardless of the wickedness of such vows, gave the order for the beheading of John; and the head was brought immediately to the foolish girl, who carried it to her gloating mother. The picture of the young girl carrying this gruesome trophy to her vicious mother is a true revelation of the depths to which corruption will go for its revenge.

A LONG, BUSY DAY—6:30-56

Physical weariness, made acute by their inability to find time to eat because of the crowds, coupled with heaviness of heart on account of the news of the death of John, caused Jesus to suggest to his disciples that they cross over the lake for a brief season of rest. Refreshment, however, was not to be theirs; for the people, anticipating the Master's destination, ran out of all the towns and reached the landing place before Jesus did and greeted him upon his arrival. The shepherd heart of Jesus went out in compassion toward this multitude of needy humanity, because they impressed him as sheep without a shepherd. He forgot his own weariness and gave himself to the ministry of teaching and healing.

As the day wore on, the practical disciples reminded the Master that they were in a desert place and that the lunch hour was far passed, and suggested that he send the people into the nearby villages that they might obtain food. Jesus commanded the disciples to feed the people. When the disciples inquired about how to get bread enough, Jesus asked them how many loaves they had. John reports that there was a lad among them with five barley loaves and two fishes—all Gospels mention the loaves and fishes; only John speaks of the lad. Meet the lad. He had left home early that morning to go fishing. His mother had fixed him a lunch of a couple of fish sandwiches. His attention was attracted by the crowds, and he made his way to where they were and soon was parked right in the front row. "There is a lad here." Yes, sir; and he never missed a thing, except his lunch; he forgot all about eating. When someone mentioned bread, he straightened up, slapped his hand on his pocket,

remembered his lunch, and turned to Andrew with the information that food was at hand. Don't overlook the lads!

Now occurs one of the most spectacular miracles in the Bible. It is the only miracle recorded in all four Gospels; it cannot be explained away; it must be accepted without reservation or rejected flatly; there is no room for quibbling. Jesus commanded his disciples to have the people sit down in orderly fashion; he took the boy's lunch, asked the Father's blessing upon it, and gave to the disciples to give to the people. Five thousand men ate until they were filled, and twelve baskets full were left over. I hope you are watching the eyes of the lad as he witnesses the operation of the power of Jesus on his surrendered resources, and that you are resolving to give Jesus just what you have and let him use it for his glory in the service of humanity.

The turning point in the ministry of Jesus has come; he now finds it necessary to avoid the crowds, for they have sensed his practical power and are determined to make him king. He therefore constrains his disciples to go on across the lake while he sends the multitudes away. The disciples have obeyed, the people have gone, evening has come, and Jesus is on the mountain alone. The quiet sought early in the morning has at last been found; Jesus communes with the Father. We shall not intrude upon the Master in prayer; long into the night he prays.

In the meantime one of Galilee's fierce storms has risen and threatens to destroy the boat in which the disciples are riding. Looking out over the sea Jesus discovers their distress and starts to them walking upon the sea. The physical fear of the disciples yields to mental terror as they behold what appears to be a ghost walking on the water. The

troubled disciples cry out in their fear and anxiously await developments.

Over the uproar of the raging waves into the terrified hearts of the disciples came the strong, reassuring words of the Master, "Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid." Note the arrangement of the clauses, with special reference to the one in the center; that is the secret of realizing the other two. There is no occasion for gloom or fear when Jesus is present. They passed on over into Gennesaret, where Jesus gave unstintingly of his healing power to the multitudes of sick and afflicted ones brought within reach of his blessed presence. Wonderful Saviour!

TRADITION OR SPIRIT?—7:1-23

It was inevitable that the spiritual teachings of Jesus should clash with the mechanical ritualism of the ecclesiastical authorities. Form without substance, letter without spirit, religiosity without godliness—such characteristics must of necessity be exposed by the simple, heart-searching truths with which the words of Jesus were shot through. The Master apparently welcomed the break and met the issue squarely and frankly.

The storm broke, it seems, when the Pharisees saw some of the disciples eating bread as they walked through the plain, without washing their hands; a ceremonial requirement had been ignored. These washings had to be performed in a certain way, covering a certain portion of the hands, without any thought at all to an inner cleansing. They were ablutions which took no note of needed cleansings.

The situation gave Jesus an opportunity to expose the body of traditions to which the Pharisees gave slavish obedi-

ence. Traditions mean, of course, opinions handed down by word of mouth from generation to generation. In this case they included interpretations of law, interpretations of traditions, and interpretations of interpretations. In many instances, as Jesus pointed out, they had actually nullified the word of God. Watch the Master go immediately to the center of the problem. Calling all the people to him, he announced the general principle that it is not that which enters into a man from without that defiles, but rather the things that come out of him. That is to say, a little surface dirt on unwashed hands will prove utterly harmless even though it be taken into the stomach, while an unworthy thought harbored in the mind corrupts the whole life.

It is not surprising that the disciples, when they had a moment of privacy, sought more light on the subject. Expressing surprise that their understanding seemed dull, the Master very patiently and in some detail elaborated the general statement made to the crowd. He explained the regular process by which nature eliminates the possibly injurious, and then called the ugly roll of evil things that emanate from the corrupt interior.

Through the whole discussion Jesus gave convincing emphasis to the superiority of the inner life; he magnified Christianity's great contribution to education, namely, the recognition of the heart as the seat of motive power, the source of life's wellsprings. Jesus would seem to say that a man may be trained perfectly as a good animal, but he is not educated until the heart has been regenerated and purified. The fundamental error in modern education is the disposition to magnify body and mind to the neglect of the heart life. We shall return to sanity in education only as we approximate the very practical philosophy of Jesus.

BEYOND BORDERS—7:24-37

In infancy Jesus had accompanied Mary and Joseph in the flight to Egypt; this temporary withdrawal into Phoenicia and Decapolis marks the only other time that he went outside of Palestine during his earthly life. In this new section, among strange people, he wrought marvelously, and no doubt impressed his disciples with the universal nature of his ministry. Gladly would he have remained in retirement, "but he could not be hid."

The emotions of motherhood know no racial or territorial bounds; they are universal. So the language and nationality of this distressed woman are lost in her motherhood; her daughter was sorely afflicted, and she came begging that Jesus would cast the evil spirit out of her loved one. She gave no heed to rights or proprieties; her child was terribly tormented, and from what she had heard she believed Jesus had the power to remove the cause.

In the matching of wits between Jesus and the woman, the mother had the benefit of that resourcefulness supplied by the mysterious sharpening of anxiety, burden, and earnestness. When Jesus told her that the children must first be filled and that it was not proper to cast the children's bread unto the dogs, I do not believe he was speaking harshly or that she so understood it. Nor do I think that it helps to be reminded that he said "little dogs" rather than just plain "dogs." In my opinion there is a suggestion of the colloquial in the language used that would rob it of its apparent roughness and make it entirely acceptable to those familiar with its usage. Jesus never spoke unkindly to any burdened soul. Tenaciously the distressed mother accepted the Master's statement, but reminded him that the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from the children's table. She wanted

no recognition, no seat at the table; she asked only what was thrown away as the children were fed. Faith like that always wins. Jesus, just as eager to grant her request as she was to make it, turned to her and told her that was enough; for that saying she might go her way, her daughter was healed; and so she was. Mother's persevering faith had triumphed.

Now we meet a peculiarly afflicted man. He was deaf but not altogether mute; he could talk a little, but he had an impediment in his speech which made talking difficult. But—he had some friends! When it was known that Jesus was in their region, these friends brought him to Jesus with the request that the Master put his hand upon him. Jesus, knowing their spirit, did not take the trouble to explain that it was not necessary to touch him in order to heal; but, as if to encourage them, Jesus took the afflicted man aside, made at least three physical contacts with him, and, looking up to heaven, sighed and commanded that his ears be opened; and it was done, and the man was restored to normal faculties. So well known was the afflicted man that the news of his healing spread widely in spite of the injunction to silence, and people were astonished “beyond measure” at the power of Jesus. People were often amazed and astonished in the presence of Jesus, but this is the only time when it is said that such astonishment was “beyond measure.” The glorious Christ lost none of his attractiveness among alien races.

MULTITUDE FED—8:1-9

The description of the feeding of the four thousand reminds one so forcefully of the circumstances and manner of feeding the five thousand that many critics have been in-

clined to consider these miracles as one and the same. However, there seems to be no ground for such a position. On the contrary, there is positive evidence that the two were separate and distinct apart from the difference in details. All four Gospels record the first of these miracles; Matthew and Mark record both of them. Then in verses 19-20 of the chapter under consideration Jesus very distinctly refers to both miracles and uses them to enforce his point.

In this case Jesus took the initiative, calling attention to the fact that the people had been without food for three days, and that they were too far from home to be sent to their own houses for food lest they faint on the way.

To the disciples' inquiry as to how a man could feed these men here in the wilderness Jesus asked what food they had, and upon learning that they had seven loaves and a few small fishes he ordered the people to sit down on the ground. Now he proceeded with his miracle. He blessed the food and gave it to the disciples to pass to the four thousand, and they ate heartily, and the disciples took up seven baskets full of what was left over. The same comment that was made on the former nature miracle applies here.

IMPORTANT STATEMENTS—8:10-9:1

Conflicts with the Pharisees become more frequent, and they are constantly endeavoring to trap him. In this instance they come seeking a sign, only to be told that no sign shall be given them ("but the sign of Jonah"—Matt. 16: 4). As Jesus and his disciples were rowing back to the other side, he cautioned them to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of Herod, that is, of the bad politics of Herod and the bad religion and politics of the Pharisees (Robertson). The disciples remembered that they had for-

gotten to take bread along and thought that Jesus had that in mind. Their dullness of perception drew from Jesus some rapid-fire questions designed to strengthen their understanding.

The connecting links close with the familiar story of the healing of the blind man near Bethsaida, with particular stress upon the gradual process by which his sight was restored. Somewhere by the roadside in the towns of Philip's Caesarea, Jesus asked his disciples, "Who do men say that I am?" It is interesting to note the threefold nature of the answer, and to observe that the Jews had the highest opinion of Jesus. In their efforts to account for him they refused to acknowledge his deity, but they did identify him with the greatest men in Jewish history. With forceful emphasis Jesus converts the general question into a personal one and asks the disciples what they think about him. "Who am I? What is your opinion?" These are the important questions. Peter answered immediately with his famous confession of Jesus as the Christ, and the Master commanded that they should not yet proclaim that fact.

These conceptions of Jesus prepared the disciples for his self-revelation. Calvary was only six months ahead. Jesus now began to teach them something of the nature of the fulfillment of his mission. He spoke of his sufferings, his rejection by the authorities, his murder, and his resurrection. The disciples caught the first parts of his teachings, but there is no evidence that any one of them grasped or remembered one word about his resurrection.

Such serious statements were too much for Simon Peter. He took Jesus in hand and began to rebuke him for making such statements concerning himself. Poor blundering Simon. He excels all others in exercising the ability to say the wrong

thing at the wrong time. There is little doubt that his intentions were good; he simply spoke out of the abundance of his ignorance. Mark—sometimes called Peter's secretary, you will remember—omits the eulogy of Peter, but records the withering rebuke that Jesus administered to Peter, the most stinging words directed to a disciple by the Master. In the full presence of the disciples, who may have shared Peter's views, Jesus addressed him as Satan because he did not understand the things of God but confined himself to the things of ordinary men, and ordered Peter to get behind him, recalling one of the wilderness temptations.

It is now time to proclaim what it means to be a Christian. The preceding conversations have prepared the minds of the disciples, and the curious who crowded around him up here in the heathen country must be informed. Addressing himself to the assembled multitude as well as to the disciples, Jesus sets forth in words easy of understanding but difficult of performance the conditions of discipleship. If one is going to be a follower of Jesus—"come after me"—one must learn how to deny himself, to forget himself, to "say no to himself" (Robertson)—in short, to rub himself out of the picture in his surrender to Jesus. The second condition is cross bearing, a beautiful emblem of Christian walking. A burdenless Christian is an anomaly. If he has no cross of his own to bear, it is his business to get under his neighbor's load. Then, as if to sum up the whole matter, Jesus seems to say this thing of being a Christian means to follow him. That's it. Jesus has blazed all the trails; he alone can set the pace; it is ours to follow him in self-effacement, in compassionate ministry, in triumphant living.

It is never wise to attempt to grade the teachings of Jesus in order of their importance, but one may be pardoned the

observation that in the light of their subject these few verses (35-38) contain a philosophy of life unapproached and unapproximated anywhere in literature. No intelligent person wants to make a mess of life, to lose it; every person with even a very small measure of brains would make his life count for the most possible.

Hear the words of Jesus, "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it," and prove the truth of them from history and observation. Follow the fortunes of those who have made of life a self-seeking, self-indulging, self-enjoying experience, and note the utter absence of any satisfying results at its close. Jesus also said, "Whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it." Apply the same severe test to this statement and count the abiding satisfactions of a life given in service for the Master. These great declarations are true not only because Jesus made them; he made them because they are true.

Have you ever tried to place a valuation upon that important part of man which we call the soul? Suppose you try it in an effort to answer the questions of Jesus. How much will a man gain who loses his soul in even a successful attempt to gain the material universe? What would be a proper exchange for the soul? These questions call for the long look—far beyond material advantage and human preferment to the present and ultimate good of the soul.

Who would be ashamed of Jesus and his words? Evidently many are ashamed of them. Of such Jesus will be ashamed when he returns "in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels." This is the first reference to our Lord's second coming, and is linked positionally with the next verse, which has been placed in the succeeding chapter. I do not believe, however, that the reference in verse 1 of the ninth

chapter is to the Second Coming. I incline to the opinion advanced by many capable writers that Jesus is here referring to the transfiguration scene that is to take place six days later. Obviously our business is so to honor Jesus and his words both by confession and by life that we may be ready for that return for which so many devout souls are praying.

JESUS ON THE MOUNT AND IN THE VALLEY

Mark 9:2-29

THE LORD OF VISION CONFINES NOT HIS HABITATION TO THE MOUNTAINS

THE MOUNT OF VISION—9:2-8

Time of Withdrawal
Party and Place
The Metamorphosis
Distinguished Visitors
Sacred Conversation
Stupid Interruption
The Approving Voice
Unblurred Vision

THE VALLEY OF NEED—9:14-29

The Arguing Throng
A Father's Witness
Faithless Rebuked
Father Questioned
Power Matches Faith
Earnest Petition
Miracle Performed
Failure Accounted for

MOUNTAINSIDE TALK—9:9-13

The Puzzling Charge
Concerning Elias

SUGGESTIVE

Power Before Service
Heavenly Recognition

THE GLORY OF THE MOUNTAIN FINDS ITS CLIMAX IN SERVICE IN THE PLAIN

The outline is an attempt to present in graphic fashion the passage as a unit, and the subdivisions supply excellent talking points for emphasis. This outline and the discussion of it are submitted for study as well as for teaching. The reader will notice that the first and third divisions are placed in both contrast and supplement: the mount of vision stands out in sharp contrast to the valley of need, and finds its logical expression in service.

Of course we shall not overlook the top and bottom lines. Many of us can never go to the mountains and would therefore be deprived of contact with the Lord of vision if he could be found only there. But—praise his name!—he is available everywhere, and the “mountaintop experiences” of most Christians are found in the privacy of their own closets. Whenever the Christian reaches that condition in which he can see “no man any more, save Jesus only,” he is on the mountaintop. How badly our leaders in all positions of heavy responsibility need the strength of the mountain. It is equally obvious that the glory of the mountain finds its climax in service. How badly this terribly distressed old world needs the services of men and women who have seen God and been touched by the fire of his power.

THE MOUNT OF VISION—9:2-8

About one week (Matthew and Mark say six days; Luke says after about eight days; let us leave it to the extreme literalists to find any contradiction or discrepancy here), after Peter’s great confession occurred one of the most dramatic, even spectacular, incidents in the life of Jesus; we call it the Transfiguration. It took place in a very high mountain, presumably not far from Caesarea Philippi. Several traditions have joined in selecting Olivet or Tabor as the Mount of the Transfiguration. Modern scholarship appears to have discarded both of these and to have agreed upon Hermon as the favored mount. At any rate, it was a high mountain and apart from disturbing contacts.

The transfiguration party consisted of Jesus and the three members of his choice inner circle. For reasons best known to himself Jesus asked these three disciples to share with him some of his most intimate experiences. One writer,

seemingly to attract attention, claims that Peter, James, and John were chosen because they were the weakest of the disciples and needed the experience. The rest of the world of biblical scholarship believes they were chosen to share this experience because they were best qualified to appreciate its significance. I incline to the latter view, and at the same time must admit that if these were the best—they went to sleep, you remember—Jesus had to rely upon some very frail material. Let us not forget that the twofold purpose of the Transfiguration was to strengthen Jesus and to develop the disciples. Regarding all of the experiences of Jesus we must remember that each one of them has very definite bearing upon the preparation of his disciples to carry on his work.

The miraculous features of the Transfiguration are presented with little comment, the details being drawn from the Synoptic Gospels. Luke says that Jesus was praying when "his countenance was altered" and his raiment became "white and glistering"; Matthew says that Jesus' face "did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light"; Mark makes no reference to his features, but does say that "his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them." It is obvious that there is no conflict here; the accounts are practically identical, and are agreed that the unusual appearance manifested itself in the whiteness and brightness of the form of Jesus. By the same token it would seem that here we have three accounts of a great miracle, each preserving the peculiarities of the human writers, and all of them harmonizing under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

I have no explanation of this marvelous scene; clearly it was a manifestation of a light "that never was, on sea or

land," owing its origin to the power of the Father. Suddenly there appeared unto them two visitors from the other world, Moses and Elias, who talked with Jesus about his death which should take place shortly at Jerusalem. We wish we could know something of the details of this conversation with Moses, the representative of the Law, whom God buried, and Elias, the spokesman of the Prophets, who was translated without death; we do know that it was a sacred and refreshing experience for Jesus.

Each one of the three Gospels makes it clear that the disciples saw and knew the heavenly visitors. Matthew and Mark say that the visitors talked with them, while Luke states specifically that Peter and his companions saw the Master's glory and the two men that stood with him. Luke explains that the eyes of the disciples were heavy with sleep—it is interesting to note that the inspired writers make every possible allowance for the sleepy disciples: "their eyes were heavy"; they slept "for sorrow"; twice Jesus, speaking of the Gethsemane experience, said, "The flesh is weak." The statement warrants the inference that they were aroused out of their sleep in time to catch a glimpse of the transfiguration scene. This accounts for the very awkward and irrelevant remarks that Peter made—not knowing what to say, as Mark reminds us, or not knowing what he said, as Luke has it. It is evident that Peter was filled with fear and embarrassment; he had slept through a good part of the scene, and when he woke up the silence was terrible.

Have you ever been in a company, particularly of young people, when the conversation slowly ran out, and silence settled down over the group, and you felt that if somebody didn't say something you would scream—and you did finally say something, and everybody screamed? Of course you

had said the wrong thing, but you had broken the oppressive silence. It was much the same situation. Somebody must say something. Partly to divert attention from his own delinquency and partly to break the painful silence, Peter said, "Lord, this is the finest place we ever saw. Let's build three tents—one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elias, and stay right here. James and John and I will sleep out in the open." Noble impulse; but he missed the point a million miles, just as many another inattentive listener has done.

Almost unconsciously we find ourselves criticizing the disciples for lack of attention and interest, and saying that we would have done better. Would we? We must remember the limited experience of the disciples; we must recall our own superior advantage of centuries of Christian living; then, worst of all, we must confess that, with all our advantages, actually we do not do any better than the disciples. We sleep on the job constantly; we give only limited attention to the prophets of God as they open the Word; and too often we seize upon the interpretation that suits our pleasure or our convenience. Jesus showed wonderful patience with his hearers; the preacher of the gospel today must have something of that same patience. It is my deliberate judgment that the preacher who would really honor his calling has about the most difficult task among us. The average church is doing its best to win the applause of the world; the very best congregations come to the services of the church with little or no preparation for a service of worship. The pastor, with his heart on fire with the message that has come in study and prayer, faces his people with the consciousness that most of them have not opened a Bible during the week, and that the thoughts of most of them are still occupied with worldly cares. He must not

speaking longer than twenty-five or thirty minutes; he must use half his time in an effort to prepare the people for the message, and then must deliver the message in the ten or fifteen minutes that remain. If he actually drives the message home, he is a wonder. The people, of course, get only an inadequate conception of the message; many of them do not know anything about the message. Our pastors need the prayerful support of their people that the Word may be honored in the hearing of the people.

There was no opportunity for Jesus to reply, for even as Peter spoke a cloud overshadowed them, and they were afraid as they entered it. Presently a voice came out of the cloud saying, "This is my beloved son; hear him" (Mark and Luke; Matthew says "in whom I am well pleased")—another powerful witness of the deity of Jesus. We will recall that this was not the only time that the voice from heaven acclaimed the deity of Jesus. One cannot believe the Bible and doubt the deity of Jesus. Matthew says that when the disciples heard the voice they fell on their faces and were sore afraid, and that Jesus came and touched them and told them to get up and be not afraid. All agree in practically identical words that when they lifted up their eyes they saw Jesus only. Here is the heart of their immediate experience. They needed a vision of Jesus, detached and in his proper environment; now they had it. Perhaps the greatest need of those who try to do the Lord's work today is a vision of Jesus, the glorified Christ.

This colorful scene presents a challenge to the consecrated imagination; there is no danger that its meaning may be exhausted, but there is some likelihood that foolish interpretations may be placed upon it. Possibly it is best just to drink in the scene without effort at detailed analysis.

Dr. Schofield, who leans a bit too strongly toward the symbolic, says that this scene contains in miniature all the elements of the future kingdom: Jesus in glory; Moses glorified, representing the redeemed who have passed through death; Elijah, glorified, representing the redeemed who have been translated; the three disciples, not glorified, representing Israel; and the multitudes at the foot of the mountain representing the nations who are to be brought into the kingdom. We do know that assurance unmistakable was given Jesus as he faced Jerusalem, and that the three disciples witnessed the glory of him whom they had so lately confessed as Messiah. The purpose of the Transfiguration had undoubtedly been accomplished. Jesus had been refreshed in contemplation of his death, and the disciples never forgot this spiritual experience.

MOUNTAINSIDE TALK—9:9-13

Luke says that the disciples kept this high and holy experience to themselves and told no man in those days anything about it. The other writers refer to the conversation that took place as the four made their way down the mountain. Can you visualize this group of four? Can you imagine the feelings and thoughts of the three disciples? I do not suppose that the three were in a very talkative frame of mind. Even Peter could be silent at times. It is well to remember that their knowledge was limited and their experience even more restricted. Jesus understood and in their conversation charged them not to tell what they had seen till he had risen from the dead. Naturally this puzzled them, and they kept questioning one another about the meaning of rising from the dead; the disciples simply could not grasp the doctrine of the Resurrection—yet. One of them,

remembering Malachi's statement (4:5-6) concerning Elijah, asked Jesus why the scribes said Elias must first come. This gave the Master the opportunity to explain that Elias had already come in the person and ministry of John the Baptist. He said furthermore that John had suffered his fate and that the Son of Man must yet suffer and "be set at naught." I confess that these are rather difficult words, and I sympathize with the disciples in their bewilderment. Maybe the vision of the Master's glory which they had just witnessed threw light on the words. It was indeed a very intimate and significant conversation as they walked down the mountain.

THE VALLEY OF NEED—9:14-29

The natural contrasts here are obvious. We naturally think of the difference between mountain and valley, and we recognize the charm of each. With the mountain we invariably associate vision, refreshing, inspiration, strength; the valley suggests activity, toil, need. Somehow I deplore the tendency in most of our cities for our churches to abandon the downtown area and move out to the more comfortable and attractive neighborhood or suburban districts; the fact that such a movement seems inevitable does not decrease my regret. I believe in maintaining vigorous light-houses in the areas which the devil makes most attractive. In this particular case the contrast between conditions on the mountain and in the valley was indeed sharp.

It was a motley and confused throng that met the eyes of Jesus when he joined his other disciples at the base of the mountain and saw the scribes tauntingly questioning them. Can you imagine the contrast between these scenes? There was still about Jesus a suggestion of the divine glory,

so that all the people were amazed when they saw him and ran to him and saluted him. Jesus quietly asked the scribes what they were questioning about, and a poor fellow from the crowd hastened to answer. He told Jesus, with all the eloquence of a stricken father, of the pitiful affliction of his son—how under the influence of the dumb spirit he foamed and gnashed his teeth and pined away, being utterly helpless. He also told Jesus that he had appealed to the disciples for help and they could do nothing. In partial rebuke, but more in lament over their lack of faith and their inability to use the power available, Jesus addressed his disciples, calling them faithless and deploring their helplessness without his presence; then he told the distressed father to bring the boy to him.

The father responded at once, and when the boy saw Jesus another attack came on, and the unfortunate lad fell on the ground and wallowed, foaming. I have seen something similar due to what we called epilepsy. I recall the case of a highly respected citizen who would have such attacks on the street and in church; he would apparently be thrown down, would scrape on the ground or floor, utter words that he would not use when in his right mind, and often foam at the mouth. Apparently Jesus now held a semiprivate interview with the father, questioning him as to how long the boy had been afflicted. The father answered in detail, and begged Jesus if he could to have compassion on them and help them. I do not know a more genuine case of sincere supplication. Jesus drew out his faith by telling him that "all things are possible to him that believeth." These words have been put to music in one of our most popular choruses, "Only Believe." Immediately there came in response that wonderful prayer that we quote so often,

"Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief." Most of us are prone to forget that these words were not spoken by a devout worshiper, but by an anxious father in tears by the roadside.

This unknown father is an illustration of effective approach to Jesus. It is interesting to note his manner and his characteristics. In the first place, he had a terrible need; he knew it, and he knew that he himself could not meet it. I doubt if anyone ever really comes to Jesus until he feels his need of the power of Jesus. This man knew about Jesus; he may never have seen him; his apparent lack of faith is really evidence of his trust. In deepest humility he begged Jesus to have compassion on him and his boy and help them, *if he could*. This reminds us of the words of the leper, "If thou wilt, thou canst." (Mark 1:40.) Jesus was not displeased with the approach; he promptly turned the words that the father used to arouse his faith. "If thou canst!" Jesus seems to say: "The question is not whether I am able but whether you can believe." Then he told him that all things, even the healing of the afflicted boy, were possible if he would only believe. These words brought from the father the wonderful confession and petition, spoken in tears, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." Of course, he obtained his request. I do not believe that anyone ever approached Jesus in the spirit of this distressed father without receiving the answer to his request.

The excitement had attracted the people, who came running in such numbers that the conversation must stop. Accordingly Jesus rebuked the demon and ordered him to come out of the boy and enter no more into him. The demon obeyed, crying, and tearing the boy as he came out. The onlookers, seeing the afflicted boy, said that he was

dead. But Jesus lifted him up and gave him to his father. Wonderful servant of humanity, this Savior of the world. The more we contemplate Jesus, the more amazing he becomes; he certainly did not behave much like a king, but he lost no opportunity to show his compassionate power. There is no way of identifying this father and his afflicted son except to say that they were sorely in need of help which man could not supply, and Luke says they were all amazed at the mighty power of God.

When Jesus and the disciples had gone indoors, the nine sought the explanation of their failure, "Why could not we cast him out?" Perhaps this was the first time since Jesus had given them power over evil spirits that they had failed; their failure had been complete and conspicuous. Again our sympathy is with the disciples; they could not but have been confused. Honestly, they wanted to know what they lacked. I love to believe that they profited by the answer which Jesus gave them. The Master told them very frankly that they had failed because they had not prayed (the words "and fasting" do not appear in the best manuscripts and are clearly a late addition; Dr. Robertson makes it very plain that these two words are both needless and untrue). "They were powerless because they were prayerless"—and so are we.

SUGGESTIVE

I was a mature man before I saw any practical application of this lesson. I had heard many sermons, helpful sermons, on the Transfiguration, but they all left me on the mountain. It remained for a student preacher to come along one day and link this wonderful story up with everyday living. He drew the contrast between the three with Jesus and the nine struggling in the hostile atmosphere of

JESUS ON THE MOUNT, IN THE VALLEY

the valley; he showed that mountaintops are not made for dwelling places; he magnified the mountaintop as the place of vision, of inspiration, of power, for use in the valley of service; he even said that there is no sense in having a mountaintop experience unless one translates it into service where the needs of men are great. Sometimes I hear people say that they believe in practical religion; well, that's the kind that Jesus practiced and taught.

Thirty years ago the young man gave the interpretation, and his burning words linger and will linger. The call of the valley where men toil and sweat and sin and suffer is just as urgent as it was when Jesus walked the earth; his power is just as adequate today as it was then. The failure of Christians in the midst of world need is just as colossal and even more conspicuous; the cause of the failure remains the same. After we have mastered the details of this scene, we will be unkind to ourselves and untrue to the Master's teachings if we do not see in the passage the necessity of power before undertaking service. The really able Christian leans on God's resources. It was never so easy to rely on man's ability and man's organizing genius in meeting the problems of human suffering and sin, and it was never so easy to fail as it is now. The Master's work is done only as his followers are willing to undertake it in his wisdom and power. These come by prayer.

As I wrote the last two sentences I could not keep from asking myself the question, "Do you believe those words?" Is it true that success in the Master's work depends upon his wisdom and power? Are these resources to be obtained by prayer? They certainly are. And yet Christians, all of us, piddle along our powerless ways when all the resources of Deity are at our command. Jesus seems to say that these re-

sources are made available by prayer. In the light of our poverty, I wonder if we are doing any praying. In a very remarkable little book, *God Runs My Business*, Mr. Robert LeTourneau is quoted as asking, "What's the sense in a religion that won't work?" Rather arresting question, don't you think? I wonder if some of us are fooling ourselves by a perfunctory devotion to a powerless religion. Those with whom Jesus associated and whom he would teach were thoroughly acquainted with a religion and observed its forms scrupulously. The disciples were yet to learn the practical value of their religion. It is high time that powerless Christians were transformed into functioning witnesses of their Lord. Jesus says this is done through prayer.

I may be pardoned for calling attention to a glorious truth which seems to be only incidental to the main teaching of the lesson. The disciples, of course, had never met Moses and Elias. These great characters had long been citizens of the "other land"; and yet Peter, James, and John had no introduction to them, nor did they need any. What bereaved child of God has not asked whether we shall know one another in heaven? Maybe you have asked that question. The Bible does not give a specific answer to this question of the troubled heart; but it does leave some strong hints along the way, and here is one of them. We shall not need any introductions in our Father's house; we shall know not only our loved ones there, but all of the redeemed throughout time. We rob ourselves by giving too little thought to our glorified Lord and the things which he has prepared for them who love and serve him.

JESUS TEACHES TRUE GREATNESS

Mark 9:30-10:52

THE SON OF MAN CAME TO MINISTER AND TO GIVE HIS LIFE

THE DAYS AHEAD—9:30-32; 10:32-34

Sufferings Foretold
Victory Promised
Fearful Disciples

JESUS AND DIVORCE—10:1-12

Pharisees Inquire
Nature of Marriage
Cases of Adultery

**TRUE GREATNESS—9:33-37; 10:13-16,
35-45**

Current Conceptions
Lovely Illustrations
Test of Greatness

JESUS AND YOUTH—10:17-22

Vivid Setting
Message of Love
Message of Yearning

**PRACTICAL CHRISTIANITY—9:38-50;
10:46-52**

Other Faiths
All Offenses
Roadside Ministry

RICHES AND SALVATION—10:23-31

General Statement
Vivid Figure
God's Possibles

WHOSOEVER WILL BE CHIEFEST SHALL BE SERVANT OF ALL

We continue this wonderful ninth chapter, without omitting a verse of the remainder, and also include the whole of the tenth chapter. It will be borne in mind that Jesus is Jerusalem bound, and thoroughly conscious of all that that implies. He is passing through his beloved Galilee for the last time before his crucifixion. The shorter the time, the more necessary that it should be used for the training of

the disciples in the fundamentals in which they are still sadly deficient. This section is an excellent illustration of Jesus' method of instruction. For the remainder of the ninth chapter there is no evidence of anyone's being present except the twelve. *The Expositor's Greek Testament* calls this section "The Twelve at School," and so it is.

Even superficial study of this passage will reveal how very far from Christ's ideals our age is. Our top and bottom emphasis lines are designed to provoke some serious thinking concerning Christian standards. Jesus, by example first and then by word, taught the principle of greatness through service. He drew upon childhood and youth for his illustrations and made it perfectly plain that it is the Christian's high privilege to guard the safety and happiness of children. Many of our very fine people are prone to get lost in a tangle of quibbles and give their support, actively or otherwise, to the liquor traffic, the greatest enemy childhood has. We need to get back to fundamentals. Christians can't support anything that cannot live except by the suffering and unhappiness of little children.

THE DAYS AHEAD—9:30-32; 10:32-34

The experiences of the recent days had been most strenuous; some of the disciples were never to get over them. As they made their way through Galilee, it is not unreasonable to suppose that the minds of the disciples were preoccupied; it is practically certain that they were not thinking of what Jesus had in mind. This is a clear case of minds passing instead of coming together. Twice Jesus brought up the subject that was claiming his best thought and concern, and tried to teach them concerning the things that were to take place soon. They were going up to Jerusalem; the Son of

Man would be delivered into the hands of his enemies, the chief priests and the scribes; his enemies would condemn him to death and deliver him to the Gentiles, who would mock him and scourge him and spit upon him and put him to death. It is noteworthy that twice in the same discussion Jesus assured them that after he had been killed he would rise again on the third day. We have no reason to suppose that Jesus spoke these words less distinctly than those preceding; I do not know why they failed to impress the disciples. My guess is that they were so completely shocked at the thought of what awaited Jesus that they could think of nothing else. Furthermore, the idea of the Master's coming out of the tomb was so foreign to their thought and experience that it did not register with them.

Mark says that they made no comment on what Jesus told them because they did not understand him and were amazed and afraid to ask him for an explanation of his meaning. Why were they afraid? Well, possibly one opinion is as good as another. Doubtless Dr. Robertson is correct in the suggestion that they remembered Peter's experience on the former occasion when Jesus spoke of his death. Certainly Peter remembered it, and his silence left the company without a spokesman. At any rate, the disciples were far away from the thoughts of Jesus, as the next verses reveal.

TRUE GREATNESS—9:33-37; 10:13-16, 35-45

By this time any doubt that we may have had about the human nature of the disciples has been dispelled; they were intensely human. They confused greatness with position and sought places of preferment just like some other people

of whom you have heard. Even in the shadow of the Master's great suffering their thoughts were selfish.

Their subdued silence along the way did not deceive Jesus. When they reached Capernaum and had resumed residence in the house which was placed regularly at their disposal, Jesus showed his familiarity with their mental processes. They had evidently engaged in some rather heated conversation; they kept arguing, not about the approaching death of Jesus, but about the relative rank that each one of them would have in the new political kingdom which they were expecting Jesus to set up. The "spoils system" may be a comparatively new political phrase, but the idea is as old as the race. Just now it is being overworked to the extent that principles that used to divide parties have disappeared, and the distinction now seems to be that one party is in and holds the offices while the other is out and wants them. Not an atmosphere very conducive to high thinking along the lines of service to humanity.

Jesus sought to break their indisposition to talk things over with him by asking them pointedly what they had been talking about along the way. Again the company was silent—this time because they knew what they had been arguing about, and they had a pretty good idea that Jesus did too. Undoubtedly they were ashamed that their selfishness had guided their thoughts to such an unworthy subject as who should be greatest. It now appeared to even their dull minds to be very much out of place.

The stage was set for teaching, and Jesus took advantage of it. Note the Master's method: he sat down, called the twelve unto him, and went straight to the question in their minds. He announced the basis of true greatness: if any man would be first, he must be last of all, and servant of all.

These words fell with greater significance upon Oriental ears than they do upon ours, for servants were so plentiful in the Orient that most of the common tasks of life came to be regarded as servants' work, so that to be a servant was to be about as far removed from greatness as one could imagine. Jesus always preferred to be understood and therefore used simple methods. In further elaboration he then set a child in the midst of them and took the little fellow in his arms; then, as the pleased lad looked out upon the assembled men, Jesus told them that whosoever received one of such children in his name received him, and whosoever received him received not him but the Father who sent him. Something for those who were concerned about greatness to think about, don't you think? We may well imagine the sobering effect of these words as the disciples contemplated the simplicity, trust, affection, purity, and submissiveness of the child and recognized in them the elements of greatness. We hear much about child-centered education. Well, here it is. Centuries before the experts advocated the idea, Jesus set the child in the midst; he has been there ever since, representing at once the object, the motive, and the spirit of true education.

In the tenth chapter Jesus has more to say about the greatness of children. Parents, especially mothers, have always been proud of their children; the most unlikely man among us can draw comfort from the assurance that once he was the greatest baby in the world in the eyes of her who gave him birth. Parents in olden times desired the very best for their children, even as modern parents do, and were willing to pay the price for it. In this case they, mothers and fathers too, brought their children to Jesus that he might touch them. Why? Well, they didn't know exactly,

but they thought it would be good for the children. The disciples were somewhat disgusted with the performance and entered their protest. I am not disposed to be too hard on them; they just didn't have any more sense than the average run of men and thought Jesus should not be bothered in such fashion.

Their attitude greatly displeased Jesus, and gave him a wonderful opportunity which he used to enrich the world. How beautiful his invitation! The children are to be permitted to come unto him and are not to be forbidden, for the kingdom of God is peopled with folks like them. Children, then, were the most congenial company that Jesus could have. But he goes further to say that one shall not enter the kingdom except he receive it as a little child. Entrance into the kingdom is a gift bestowed by the operation of God's grace; it must be accepted in the simplicity, the guilelessness, the trust of a child. You know, that's the reason why so many fine people are not in the kingdom right now; they can't get down off the perch of their own self-esteem and mental vanity and take Jesus at his word, even as a little child trusts his father. Then the precious Saviour, as if to clinch what he has been saying, takes the children up in his arms, puts his hands upon them, and repeatedly blesses them. A beautiful scene, fragrant with beautiful thoughts.

In verses 35-45 of the tenth chapter Jesus dispenses finally of the question of greatness in his kingdom. James and John approached him with a question something like this, "Master, will you do what we want you to?" Naturally he wanted to know what it was, and they requested that one of them might sit on his right hand and the other on his left in his glory. Matthew says that their mother was with them

and presented their request. This is a beautiful picture of a mother's ambition for her devoted boys. Of course it was an ambitious request, but Jesus did not rebuke them nor show any displeasure. Sympathetically he remarked that they did not know what they were talking about, and then asked them a searching question, inquiring whether they could pay the price of fellowship with him. These fine brothers answered immediately that they were able to drink the cup that Jesus must drink and be baptized with his baptism; they were prepared to go all the way. The Master promised them that they should have this fellowship, but told them that the seats sought would be given to those for whom they had been prepared. These disciples later met the test of fellowship with Jesus, and we do not know that these seats were not awarded to them. Of course the other ten were shocked over the conduct of their colleagues, and showed their displeasure in such a way that Jesus noticed it. I do not take much stock in the protest of the ten; my sympathies are all with the two. Jealousy is none the less contemptible because it happens to be pious.

This unpleasantness gave Jesus the opportunity to announce a very important truth. He reminded them of the attitude of the Gentiles (Romans) toward their great ones who exercised authority because of position. Then he proclaimed strange and new standards of greatness: the great must be minister, the chiefest must be servant of all. No one had ever heard such philosophy. As if to clinch his startling statements, Jesus told them that he came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give his life a ransom for many. Christians have not yet sufficiently grasped this standard of greatness to practice it.

PRACTICAL CHRISTIANITY—9:38-50; 10:46-52

It seemed to John a good time to change the subject. He would raise a question of regularity with an implication at least of loyalty. The disciples had seen a fellow casting out devils in the name of Jesus and had forbidden him because "he followeth not us." It is evident that this man knew the source of power, had made connection with it, and was rendering effective service in the name of Jesus—but he was not of the school of the disciples. Here was an excellent opportunity for Jesus to commend John's zeal. But not so; Jesus seems to say here that it is not necessary for all of his followers to belong to the same group. He told John very positively not to forbid the man, because no man could do a miracle in the name of Jesus and speak evil of him. One who gives even a cup of cold water to a disciple because the disciple is a disciple cannot lose his reward, for the man who is not against Christ is on his side. John had evidently confused loyalty with prejudice, and Jesus would have all of us know that there is no room for prejudice in the Christian's heart.

Still speaking intimately and very earnestly, Jesus issues a threefold warning. First, he is concerned for the little ones who believe in him, and warns against offending one of them, saying it were better for the offender that "a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea." A man ought to have something else to do besides trying to shake the faith of young Christians. Second, Jesus had some very plain things to say by way of warning against hell. Perhaps, the doctrine of hell was no more popular in Jesus' time than it is today; fortunately the reality of the doctrine is not affected by popular favor. Jesus

is speaking, and he is using some pretty strong language; he speaks of "the fire that never shall be quenched; where their worm dieth not." Figurative language, you say? Well, that doesn't help much. It is an elementary principle in rhetoric that figurative language is used only when the literal is too weak to convey the idea; that is to say, if the language used by Jesus in describing hell is figurative, it is the best that language can do to picture the literal hell, which is worse than the description. Jesus believed in and taught the doctrine of hell; if we are going to teach the Book, we have no more right to skip this doctrine than to omit any other doctrine that we do not like. In fact our refusal to believe in hell will make a lot more difference to us in the last day than it will to hell. Jesus urged every sacrifice in order to escape the sufferings of eternal punishment. Finally, Jesus warned his disciples against losing their power. Early in his ministry Jesus had called his disciples the salt of the earth. Salt is good, he says, until it has lost its saltiness, when it becomes absolutely worthless. He closes his lesson by urging the disciples to have salt in themselves, and have peace one with another.

The closing verses of the tenth chapter present a perfect illustration of practical Christianity. Jesus and the disciples, followed by a great number of people, had just left Jericho. As they journeyed, blind Bartimaeus, sitting by the roadside begging, heard that Jesus was passing and began to cry out to him for mercy. The people tried to silence him, but he kept on crying, "Thou son of David, have mercy on me." Jesus stood still and commanded that the blind man be called. The crowd gave the poor fellow assurance, and he put aside his outer garment, arose, and came to Jesus. The Master, in words filled with compassion, asked him what he

wanted, and he replied in tones of happy expectancy, "Lord, that I might receive my sight." Promptly Jesus told him to go his way, that his faith had made him whole. Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus. Beautiful picture of the adequate Christ in action.

JESUS AND DIVORCE—10:1-12

The ministry of Jesus is drawing to a close; the near-at-hand Passover in Jerusalem will mark the end of his earthly mission. Multitudes of people are on their way to the Passover; Jesus and his party journey together. At intervals the people "resort unto him," and he teaches them as was his custom. It isn't difficult to visualize that scene, is it? In one of those teaching situations the Pharisees, who were never present to help or bless, inject a knotty question to tempt him; they wanted to know whether it is lawful for a man to divorce his wife. With emphasis on the "lawful" Jesus had them cite the law on the subject, and then took them back to creation to show that man and wife are one flesh, and that "mere formal divorce does not annul actual marriage consummated by the physical union. Breaking that bond does annul it." (Robertson.) Privately the disciples sought additional information, resulting in Jesus' clear statement on the question of adultery. He plainly said that whosoever puts away his wife and marries another commits adultery against her, and likewise the wife who puts away her husband and marries another commits adultery. I refrain from any effort at elaboration; the Master's language is clear.

JESUS AND YOUTH—10:17-22

This section of our study presents one of the most delightful situations in the earthly ministry of our Lord. It

pictures Jesus' concern for attractive, successful youth. We thank God for the ministry of Jesus in behalf of the aged, the infirm, the suffering, the consciously needy; not for anything would we be without such gracious ministry. But we need to remind ourselves that not all are old or discouraged or helpless or obviously needy; many are young and healthy and happy and prosperous; these need Jesus, and he has a challenging message for them.

When Jesus resumed his journey—"when he was gone forth into the way"—he was met by one of the most attractive characters in the biblical narrative; we refer to him often as the "rich young ruler," indicating at once his prosperity, his youth, and his distinction among his fellows. As the narrative unfolds it is made clear that Jesus' first message to him was one of love. It is interesting and helpful to note why Jesus loved him; the reasons are right on the surface. First, I think he loved him because of his energy and his enthusiasm. Disregarding his aristocratic position and the conventions of his day, this young ruler came running down the big road to meet a peripatetic teacher who had no social standing or recognition. We can see him as he gathered his robe about him and ran. Energy and enthusiasm are natural qualities of healthy youth; Jesus loved this young man for the proper use of these qualities. Then, Jesus loved him for his reverence. All wholesome young people are reverent; this young man kneeled right in the dust at Jesus' feet and addressed him reverently as "Good Master." No, there was no pretense or flattery here; the young man was sincerely reverent. Jesus loved him because, fine and wonderful as he was, he was conscious of still a great need. He came seeking eternal life, the pearl of great price. True, he didn't know much about how to get it, but he wanted

eternal life. There is both lovableness and hope in the young man who is conscious of higher need. Finally, Jesus loved him because of his superior character. Kneeling there in the dust he looked up into the Master's face as Jesus repeated the commandments affecting man's relations with his fellows and, without batting an eye, said without any rebuke from Jesus that he had kept all these from his youth. Let not sinning humanity sneer at his testimony; remember Jesus never criticized it; I believe the young man told the truth. Is it any wonder that "Jesus beholding him loved him?"

It is equally clear that the Master's heart of love went out in yearning toward this charming youth. Jesus loved him too much to leave him in his conscious though uncertain deficiency. He yearned for the young man to know something of real values. He told him to sell what he had and give to the poor and he would have treasure in heaven. It was too bad to permit one thing, no matter how valuable materially, to separate him from Jesus. It is a mistake to assume that Jesus requires a man to sell his property and give the proceeds to the poor; not at all, unless that property stands between the possessor and his Lord—in which case he can't afford to hold it. Then it is bad business for a man to confine his bank accounts to earthly institutions or interests; he should have a savings account in heaven. Heaven has never had a panic or a bank failure; heaven has never skipped a dividend. Jesus yearned for the young man to have treasure in heaven.

Looking down upon the strong, youthful shoulders, Jesus thought of the burdens of the world and yearned for this young man to get under them; so he told him to take up the cross. Then Jesus called upon the young man to

follow him. Of course every young man ought to follow Jesus. In this case I have thought that Jesus coveted the companionship of such a noble young fellow. We must not forget that the Master's company on earth was none too congenial. With a few shining exceptions Jesus was thrown with unsympathetic and hostile people. I believe he wanted the friendship and loyalty of this fine young man.

I regret that it was necessary for the inspired writer to record that the young man was sad upon hearing these words and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. Dante calls this "The Great Refusal," and so it was for the time at least. I cannot but indulge the hope that a young man so intelligent and so attractive to Jesus thought it over and later followed Jesus.

RICHES AND SALVATION—10:23-31

As if stunned by the departure of the young man, Jesus looked round about and said to his disciples, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" These were astonishing words then; they are even more so now. The rich then as now had the habit of going where they pleased. If the rich couldn't enter the kingdom, who could? Seeing their astonishment, Jesus modified his statement to apply to "them that trust in riches"; there is a difference between having riches and trusting in riches, but there is always the grave danger that he who has riches will come to trust in them.

To enforce his meaning, Jesus employed one of the most vivid figures in the Gospels, saying, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." I used to hear it said that "the eye of a needle" here refers to a hole in the wall

through which a camel could pass with great difficulty; but the original language gives no encouragement to such an interpretation. The reference is to a needle as we understand it, and means, of course, that a man who trusts in riches has no more chance to enter the kingdom than a camel has to go through the eye of a needle; he just can't get in.

The growing astonishment of the disciples expressed itself in the exclamation, "Who then can be saved?" To this Jesus replied calmly that things impossible with men were not so with God. "With God all things are possible." I leave it there.

JESUS ROUTS HIS CRITICS

Mark 11:1-12:44

BY DECLARATION AND BY ACT JESUS PROCLAIMS HIS DEITY

THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY—11:1-11

Mount Provided
Popular Acclaim
Temple Meditation

ENEMIES ATTACKED—12:1-12

Servants Mistreated
Son Killed
Point Understood

TEACHING FOLLOWS ACTION—11:12-26

Breakfast Sought
Temple Purged
Faith Urged

CRITICS SILENCED—12:13-34

Pharisees and Herodians
Sadducees
An Honest Scribe

QUESTION OF AUTHORITY—11:27-33

Dignitaries Speak
A Counterstroke
Complete Rout

POINTED PARAGRAPHS—12:35-44

The Son of David
Beware of Scribes
Sacrificial Giving

MAN COMPLIMENTS HIS INTELLIGENCE BY TRUSTING CHRIST

The eleventh chapter of Mark ushers in the last week of our Lord's ministry, sometimes called the Crucifixion Week, more generally known perhaps as the Passion Week. We shall consider the whole chapter: No period in the life of Jesus has stronger fascination for the Christian than this last week. It is a good time to walk reverently through these sacred scenes and to realize afresh the cost of our redemption.

The twelfth chapter of Mark, recording some important events and teachings of the Tuesday of the last week of our Lord's ministry, is one of the sternest in the Gospels. It is full of condemnations and warnings; in it the whole pack of Jesus' enemies presents a solid front in varied and fruitless attacks. The self-satisfied Pharisees, guardians of sacred traditions and past masters in conforming to the last letter of the law; the contemptuous Sadducees, constituting largely the chief-priest class and opposing vigorously the doctrine of the resurrection; the venal Herodians, profligate supporters of the rottenest dynasty that ever cursed a people; the hypocritical scribes, mostly Pharisees, parading their knowledge of and loyalty to even the punctuation marks of the law, without the slightest conception of its spirit—these, all hating one another most cordially, are now drawn together in diabolical harmony by their common bitterness toward the one whose very life was a standing rebuke to everything for which they contended. We shall consider the whole chapter, and shall indulge in pardonable pride as the Master matches wits with them and routs them one by one.

THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY—11:1-11

The Master is preparing for one of the few deliberately spectacular events in his life; he is going to enter Jerusalem in proper style and proclaim thereby his kingship. To be sure, not many who are to participate in the happy demonstration will sense its significance; but the spectacle stands out in the minds of Christians as one of the really glorious experiences in the heavily burdened life of our Lord. Jesus himself superintended all arrangements, and the disciples apparently knew nothing of the

particulars except to obey—quite enough to know, don't you think? From the region near the Mount of Olives in the Bethany country—Bethphage is supposed to have been a bit nearer Jerusalem and possibly a larger village than Bethany—Jesus sent two of his disciples, probably Peter and John, into a village near by with directions to unloose and bring to him an unbroken colt which they should find just as soon as they entered the village. Anticipating the surprise of the disciples, he told them to say to any objecting inquirer that the Lord needed the colt, and the animal would be sent immediately. Rather strange instructions, and calculated to provoke some inquiry in our minds as to the identity of the owner of the colt. Our speculation, for it can't be anything else, is of no value; the important thing is that Jesus knew what he was talking about, and the messengers took him at his word.

Without a moment's hesitation the disciples set out upon their short journey. Sure enough, as Jesus had said, they found the colt tied up back of the house. As they proceeded to untie the colt, some bystanders, including perhaps the owners of the animal, made a natural protest and wanted to know what they meant by loosing the colt. A very proper proceeding, we will agree. Calmly, with no evidence of confusion or embarrassment, the messengers told the strangers what Jesus had commanded, and they made no further objection to the release of the colt. I do not know which group manifested a finer quality of obedience, the faithful two who had come direct from the presence of Jesus or the trusting property owners who accepted the statement made and released their possession for the Master's use. In both cases the Master's will was carried out promptly and perfectly.

I trust that my readers share the joy that is mine in contemplating Jesus in a role somewhat becoming his kingly station. I am glad that this gala day came into his life; and, speaking purely from the human viewpoint, I know it must have cheered his heart for the trying ordeals ahead. The world has made a lot of fuss about royal roads and has paid absurd tribute to royal personages. Today even the democratic United States throws a fit at the sight of a titled head. It is the rarest thing in the world that a crowned head is worth a thing without the crown. Jesus came to proclaim the only royal road—the road of service, of sacrifice, of death. Jesus came to walk that road, and to call his disciples to follow therein. Jesus' teaching on royalty reminds us that humility is the badge of real royalty, and that such royalty does not have to be proclaimed: it will assert itself in the quality of service that it performs.

We watch with interest the preparation of the colt for the Master's use. For blanket and saddle they spread their outer garments over the colt, and Jesus sat astride him—the first passenger this young animal ever carried. Sharp indeed is the contrast between this modest mount and the gorgeous display that characterized the triumphal processions of Rome's kings, but no greater than the contrast between the King who conquered by giving and the one whose achievements were wholly in the realm of the selfish—the Christian versus the pagan.

The crowds from the city met those from the villages, and together they spread garments in the road and scattered along the way branches which they cut from overhanging trees; together also they acclaimed him as the one who came in the name of the Lord, and shouted their Hosannas to him. The procession continued its joyous way to Jeru-

salem, which Jesus entered, tradition says, through the Golden Gate. This gate was found by the Crusaders walled up and was opened only once a year, on Palm Sunday. It is now kept closed the year round.

The royal spectacle ended rather ingloriously for the expectant throngs: Jesus went to the Temple, looked all around, and because it was evening returned to Bethany with the twelve. I wish we might know the significance of the words, "looked round about upon all things." To me they suggest a period of serious meditation and reflection in which the Master indulged himself.

TEACHING FOLLOWS ACTION—11:12-26

The next day was featured by two severe rebukes by Jesus, provoked in each instance by misuse. In one case a flourishing but fruitless fig tree cumbered the ground; in the other selfish men took advantage of the Temple service to enrich themselves. Early in the morning, as Jesus and the disciples were returning to Jerusalem from Bethany, they noticed a fig tree which had evidently retained its leaves through the winter, because it was too early for new leaves. Leaves, however, are usually a sign of fruit and Jesus being hungry made his way to the tree. When he discovered nothing but leaves, he pronounced a curse upon it, to the effect that no man should eat fruit of that tree thereafter. The rebuke of the fig tree must not be permitted to pass without personal application. Dr. Robertson says it had "promise without performance"—the leaves promised fruit, but the appearance was a fraud. God save us from the appearance of fruit-bearing without the substance.

Proceeding on into the Temple, Jesus found shrewd

money-changers and clever merchants—thieves, Jesus called them—who were collecting tolls for changing the money of the pilgrims from all over the empire into Jewish money required in Temple taxes by the authorities, and were selling to all who were not provided with them the doves needed in Temple sacrifice. The confusion and trafficking smacked of the market place and had no part in the prayer place. Accordingly Jesus overturned their tables and drove commercialism out of the house of prayer, much to the disgust of the religious leaders, who swore vengeance against him. The application of this incident is obvious. The place of prayer must be protected against the encroachments of a materialistic age; even God's house has a hard time in our practical era. I praise God for churches which for the most part are free from the taint of commercialism as a form of worship or a means of support. I long for the time when no such devices as suppers, bazaars, or rummage sales will be used in any church as a means of raising money for objects supported by the church. I regret that in some sections the law of the land has been invoked against forms of gambling in certain churches, and that these religious organizations are using all their power to resist such laws.

Simon Peter's observation the next day concerning the fig tree gave Jesus the occasion for one of his strongest lessons on faith and prayer. Defining faith, in substance, as believing that you have what you desire, Jesus spoke some powerful words to his disciples. The important thing in Christian living is to have faith in God—faith strong enough to remove mountains, faith that banishes every trace of doubt, faith that commands the resources of God. I have no explanation of this plain teaching. Instead of using per-

suasive words to prove that Jesus' reference to mountains is figurative, I find myself prostrated by the sense of my utter lack of faith. Perhaps my readers will join me in a prayer of consecration that our faith may become a very real, active force in Christian experience.

Again, Jesus suggests that we had just as well not pray at all as to go through the form of prayer with unforgiveness in our hearts. Then do you note the high plane on which he pitches his appeal? It is just another way of saying that a forgiving spirit is a prerequisite to effective praying, for without it we cannot obtain forgiveness. Jesus gave us the model prayer, which is often abused; but here he is proclaiming the power of God to remove mountains and to forgive sins, and he is imposing two very important conditions to acceptable prayer. How much real praying do we do?

The greatest victories in life are not won by royal armies, or by democratic armies either; they are won through the power of prayer. If Jesus did not intend to teach in this lesson conquest by prayer, then language has ceased to have meaning. Our intellectual vanity prompts us to declare that prayer is merely a psychological experience, and the spiritual barrenness of our lives proclaims our conception of prayer. Jesus did his best to teach that the infinite resources of the mighty God are available to him who has learned to ask for them. Isn't it time that our people were called to an appreciation of Jesus' conception of prayer?

QUESTION OF AUTHORITY—11:27-33

Jesus and his disciples came again into Jerusalem, and as he was walking in the Temple the self-constituted righteous came to him. Can you visualize this representative

committee of important people, including chief priests, scribes, and elders? They seek no blessing, but they would know by what authority Jesus did what he did. They were not interested in the real authority of Jesus; their only concern was to confuse and trip the Master. However, granting that it was a proper question, we must admit that right properly Jesus disposed of it. He wanted to know whether John's baptism was from heaven or of men. There he exposed them. This counterstroke drove their heads together; they reasoned among themselves; either way they turned they were confounded. They could not say it was from heaven, because they had not believed John; they were afraid to say it was of men, because the people believed John was a prophet. They therefore adopted the usual course of the coward and said they could not tell.

Thereupon Jesus refused to tell them the source of his authority. Again his critics had refused to accept his challenge to faith, and by their own actions had admitted their complete defeat.

ENEMIES ATTACKED—12:1-12

In the closing verses of the preceding chapter Jesus had outwitted the officials of the Jews on the question of his authority. From this point he takes the offensive and carries the battle to his foes. Without apparent reason he proceeds now to tell them the story of a vineyard owner who leased his improved property to some husbandmen and went into a far country. When the fruit-producing season came, he sent some bondslaves at different times to collect his share of the fruit of the vineyard. In each case the slaves were killed or treated very roughly.

Finally the owner sent his only son, reasoning that

they would respect him. On the contrary, when the husbandmen saw the son coming, they determined to possess the inheritance by killing the son, reasoning that the property would be theirs if the heir was done away with. They therefore seized the son, killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard. It was not necessary for Jesus to ask his hearers what the lord of the vineyard would do when he came. They knew that he would destroy the husbandmen and give the vineyard to others. Already these keen Jews had visualized the treatment of the prophets and of Jesus; but, to burn the matter in, Jesus reminded them of the rejected stone.

The application was clear. To their credit it must be said that for once they caught the point and knew that he had spoken the parable against them. Again, but for the fear of the people, they would have seized Jesus. They must content themselves with plans to trap him in his teaching.

CRITICS SILENCED—12:13-24

The officials now sent a committee of Pharisees and Herodians—bitter enemies usually—to “catch him in his words.” They had planned carefully. Their insincerity was made apparent to anyone by the clumsy flattery with which they approached the Master, and which he entirely ignored. Note their hypocritical expressions: “We know that thou art true, and carest for no man: for thou regardest not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth.” Wasn’t that enough to disgust the Son of God? Now they are ready with the question, which they thought was loaded. Ought folks to pay taxes to the Roman government? If he answered in the affirmative, he would lose his

popular following; if his answer should be negative, he would offend the official party and put himself in the attitude of opposing Roman rule. The Master said enough to let them know that he was wise to their scheme, and then suddenly asked that they bring him a penny. With this small coin of the realm in his hand, he turned it over and over and asked them whose image and superscription it bore. Of course, they had to say the emperor's. Then he startled them ("they marveled") by commanding them to give Caesar and God both their dues. These words are used more frequently than any others in the Bible to emphasize the duties of Christian citizenship. Jesus seems to say that a man can't be a good Christian without being a good citizen. Certainly it is important that this doctrine be revived right now. Not in my memory have the affairs of government been so widely in the control of spineless time-servers as they are now. Our salvation is in the hands of Christian men and women who will put their devotion to Christ and to human welfare above loyalty to job hunters and partisan politics. We owe a debt to the state that we cannot ignore, and yet we are forced to admit that the weakest spot in our whole political setup is the indifference of Christian citizens. In no election do Christians in large numbers participate. It is time that we obeyed our Lord's command.

This proud, wealthy, aristocratic group must have an inning in the very important contest in progress. I hope I am not irreverent in deriving a little humor out of the situation. Can you imagine how these pompous people felt after their labored question when Jesus said, "Well, my dear fellows, the only thing the matter with you is that you are just plain ignorant"? If such conceit outrages our

sense of propriety, what must it have done to the Son of God? How nauseatingly disgusting to him must have been their hypocritical strut. I am certain that Jesus got a great deal of satisfaction out of squelching his conceited critics. In this case the Sadducees framed a hypothetical question from the Mosaic law that made it possible for one woman to have seven brothers as husbands. Now in the resurrection whose shall she be? You will remember that they did not believe in any resurrection, so the question was undoubtedly asked sneeringly. Jesus stepped promptly into the question and told them that they were ignorant of both the scriptures and the power of God. For in the resurrection there is no marriage, but the resurrected are like the angels in heaven who are "directly created, not procreated." (Robertson.) He then quoted from the life of Moses the words of God, saying, "I am [not "I was"] the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob," clinching the fact of their error by insisting that God is the God of the living and that therefore the patriarchs mentioned must be alive—hence the resurrection.

One of the scribes had been listening in as Jesus talked with the Sadducees and was favorably impressed with the answers that Jesus gave. Being a loyal Pharisee, he did not have his feelings hurt by seeing the Sadducees embarrassed. Seriously he brought to Jesus an honest question concerning the first commandment. Of course he did not mean the first in order but the first in importance. He may have had in mind the 613 precepts of the law recognized by the rabbis. At any rate he made a favorable impression on Jesus, and a delightful conversation followed. Jesus quoted from Deuteronomy and Leviticus, putting together the two commandments to love God and one's neighbor and saying

that no other commandment was greater than these; and the scribe made the Master's answer his own, declaring that Jesus had spoken the truth, that there is only one God and that to love him with all the heart and understanding and soul and strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, was "more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." This was indeed a marvelous statement for a scribe to make. Jesus' heart went out to him because of his discreet and intelligent answer, and the Master remarked that he was not far from the kingdom.

POINTED PARAGRAPHS—12:35-44

Just here Mark tells us that after this no man dared ask Jesus a question. The battle of wits was over so far as the initiative of the critics was concerned, and they confessed defeat by their silence. Did someone say that Jesus does not appeal to the intelligence? Well, the intellectuals of his day would have little patience with such a view. He routed their best. He continues to charm the keenest minds among us. The critics were silenced, but Jesus would ask a question or two. How can the Messiah be both the son and Lord of David? He reminded them that the scribes all taught that Christ must be the son of David; the people had called Jesus the son of David in the Triumphal Entry; and yet David in Psalm 110 called the Messiah his Lord. This problem of course involved both the deity and humanity of the Christ, but no one answered him a word. However, the common people were listening gladly (Robertson).

In recognition of the interest of the masses, Jesus taught them to beware of the scribes who like to walk in the long robes of dignitaries, who seek salutations in the market

place where the people can see, who occupy the front seats in the synagogues and the principal places at feasts, who fatten their purses at the expense of widows' estates entrusted to them, and who make ostentatious prayers for mere pretense. Beware of these, for they shall receive even greater damnation for their hypocrisy. Can you imagine a more stinging characterization of the self-righteous or a more bitter denunciation of the purely formal in religion? We must confess that at first it does not sound like the compassionate Christ. On second reading, however, we are impressed that his very compassion compelled the statement.

The storm of conflict has spent itself; the Master is weary. As if to obtain rest after his strenuous day, Jesus sat down by the treasury and was watching how the people put their money into the treasury. He was neither spying nor inspecting, but just watching as he rested. Let's keep in mind that the Master was watching *how* and not *how much* the people gave. Apparently the Jews were pretty faithful in their obligations to Temple finances, for many gave, and no mention is made of any who avoided this duty. Furthermore the rich cast in much; they were aware, in part at least, of their stewardship. The Master was particularly impressed with the coming of a poor widow in the procession who dropped into the treasury two mites, which amounted to about one half cent. She did this unashamed by its relative insignificance, and thereby elevated herself to a hall of fame which will be respected as long as the Bible stands.

Calling his disciples to him, Jesus commented on what he had seen. He told them of the large gifts with apparent approval of the givers; but he said that the widow by cast-

ing in all her living had given more than all the others. In other words, the wealthy had given of their abundance, while she had given of her want; Jesus was judging the value of gifts not by size but by what the giver had left. Some day we are going to approximate the Master's standard here and quit praising to the skies the wealthy man who directs his secretary to make out a large check, and give proper recognition to the sacrificial giving of multitudes of the Lord's humbler followers. By the way, we must remove from our sayings, "I'll give my mite," unless we really mean to give all. The widow's mite set a new standard of high giving; I don't know any who are approximating it.

JESUS URGES WATCHFULNESS

Mark 13:1-14:9

WE CANNOT KNOW THE TIME OF OUR LORD'S RETURN

JERUSALEM DOOMED —13:1-4, 14-23, 28-30 Temple to Be Destroyed Flight Enjoined Early Fulfillment	THE CHRISTIAN'S DUTY —13:33-37 Watch and Pray Avoid Surprise Watch
THE SECOND COMING —13:24-27, 32 Natural Phenomena Gathering the Elect Time Unknown	LAST LOVE FEAST —14:1-9 Bethany Versus Jerusalem In House of Friends Mary's Act of Love
END OF THE AGE —13:5-13, 31 False Christs Wars and Persecutions The Word Endures	SUGGESTIVE Folly of Speculation Practical Second Coming Loving Expectancy

WATCHFUL SERVICE IS THE TEST OF OUR LOYALTY

Chapter 13 contains confessedly the most difficult passage in the Synoptics, but the practical significance of the chapter is seen in the concluding verses. It would be easier, and perhaps wiser, to pass over these difficult verses and give our attention to the verses of obvious meaning; but that does not seem the fair thing to do.

In spite of my ignorance, therefore, I hope to find it helpful to think about some of the things mentioned which constitute the connecting link between the preceding study

and the present passage. So far as my information goes, no one claims to be able to interpret these verses. Obviously Jesus is talking about three things: the destruction of Jerusalem, his own second coming, and the end of the world. Apparently these subjects are interwoven, and the problem at once is to disentangle the threads and group the verses according to emphasis. Every student will do his best right here, and all of us will be on solid ground when we get to verse thirty-two.

I am not at all certain about the first three divisions of the outline; I have made an honest effort to gather under these three heads the facts of the first thirty-one verses of the chapter. There is a lot of room for difference of opinion, and my fellow students may show both originality and wisdom by adhering to their own ideas of interpretation. Perhaps there will be no disagreement as to the fitness of the top and bottom emphasis lines of the outline. Certainly we cannot know the time of our Lord's return; equally certainly it is our privilege and duty to be busily watchful in loving expectation of that return.

JERUSALEM DOOMED—13:1-4, 14-23, 28-30

Jesus has been driven from the Temple by his enemies; he will never enter it again. It is not easy to imagine the state of mind of the disciples as they walked out with Jesus; the short moments must have been tense, the silence must have been painful. One of the disciples, we do not know which one, broke the silence with an observation about as far as could be from the subject of their thoughts. He called the Master's attention to the magnificent masonry of the buildings—the massive stones and the beauty of construction. This, of course, was purely commonplace, since

this masonry was a matter of common knowledge and admiration. I am told that some of these stones are still to be seen and that they are from twenty to forty feet in length and weigh a hundred tons. Jesus had often observed these products of a construction the secret of which has not yet been discovered. He replied with fresh emphasis upon the greatness of the buildings, and said to them that the time was coming when not one stone should be left upon another; they should all be thrown down, and their very heaviness would make their fall all the more complete.

They walked on with no further recorded word until they reached the Mount of Olives and sat down opposite the city and in full view of the Temple. Here four of the disciples—Peter, James, John, and Andrew (we are glad Mark mentions Andrew; the other writers omit his name)—found opportunity to talk with Jesus privately and asked him to tell them the sign when all these things were to be. Quite likely the other disciples gathered round as Jesus delivered the longest discourse recorded in Mark. Let us not forget that his public ministry had closed. For a little while Jesus is to be with friends; it is both natural and timely that his words now should bear upon the end of things—the end of the Jews as a nation, the end of the age, his own return. If the chapter seems scrappy and difficult to outline, we must remember that everything that Jesus said bore essentially on one subject, and that the practical effect was the same no matter what phase of the subject was discussed.

Elaborating upon the fall of Jerusalem, which he seems to identify with the “abomination of desolation,” he urges that the Christians flee to the mountains when they discover that desolation is upon them. He then utters a series of in-

junctions, warnings, and woes which seem to be prophecies rather than curses. He that is on the housetop need not go down to take anything out of the house; he that is in the field need not turn back to take up his garment; nursing mothers shall suffer particularly; and all should pray earnestly that the flight be not in winter lest the affliction be unbearable. A final warning is directed against false Christs and false prophets who, if possible, would seduce the very elect. Jesus concluded this section of the narrative, as I see it, by likening the signs mentioned to the forecast of summer as seen in early fig leaves; then he stated positively that these things would come to pass in that generation. Of course these prophecies were realized in the destruction of Jerusalem, A.D. 70.

THE SECOND COMING—13:24-27, 32

Jesus had much to say about his second coming and the end of the age. In many instances it seems impossible to tell which of the two events he is talking about. For that reason much of the material could be grouped under one as well as under the other; the important thing is to note what he says rather than to classify rigidly those sayings. In these verses he is evidently discussing his own return. Clearly the Second Coming, as we are accustomed to call it, is to be featured by some unusual signs in the heavens: the sun and moon go out, the stars fall, and the heavenly powers are shaken. Then will the Son of Man be seen coming in the clouds with great power and glory. The words in Acts 1:9-11 harmonize entirely with this statement; Jesus is coming back even as he ascended.

Immediately upon his appearance in power and glory Jesus will dispatch his angels or messengers on an un-

precedented errand. They will gather his elect, or chosen ones, "from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven." Frankly, I am not able to discuss this marvelous scene; I do not know whether the reference is to the same event as that described in Matthew 25:31-32 or not.

The Master was not interrupted by questionings as he proceeded with prophecies which must have startled and confused the disciples. In complete understanding of what was going on in their minds, Jesus disposed of the uppermost question. He told them positively that the day and the hour of his coming *could not be known* by any man. Furthermore, neither the angels in heaven nor the Son himself knew that hour. Could language be clearer? And yet history is punctuated by movements inspired by leaders who claimed to know the exact hour of the Lord's return. A lot of nonsense could be avoided by accepting as true the very plain words of Jesus.

END OF THE AGE—13:5-13, 31

For convenience more than for any other reason I group the remaining verses of this section under the above caption. The Master warns against false Christs who will make their appearance through the centuries. These individuals will represent themselves to be the fulfillment of these prophecies and will deceive many. Strange, isn't it, that frauds never fail to attract followers? Actually it seems that the more absurd the fraud, the larger the following. Before that generation passed at least four such characters made their appearance, and since the first century the number of false Christs and false prophets has been too great to count. Even our present day witnesses many of this

class, and the response to their appeal is simply astounding. The boasted enlightenment of our age is very poor defense against such frauds. Jesus said, "Beware of them."

As further indications of the end of the age, Jesus lists wars and rumors of wars together with their natural and inevitable consequences: nation will rise against nation, kingdom against kingdom, and these will be accompanied by natural disturbances, famines, troubles, and the beginnings of sorrows. Is it any wonder that in times like ours men insist that the end is near? It may be, but it is not for us to know. To these distressing phenomena Jesus added in some detail the persecutions—religious, civil, personal—that the Christians must suffer, and gave strong advice on how to meet them. He charges them that when they are arrested they must take no thought beforehand as to what they shall say, for the Holy Spirit will tell them what to say when the time comes. From this entirely sane advice has come the perfectly foolish idea that the preacher need not give thought to his message since the Holy Spirit will tell him what to say. Such interpretation is the height of absurdity; the analogy does not hold. I have heard Dr. Robertson say that the preacher who waits for God to fill him will be filled with hot air, and so he will.

Worse than persecutions and imprisonments are the bitternesses and hatreds that will rise up among families, resulting in betrayals and death. The followers of Jesus will be hated of all men for his sake, but they that endure to the end of the tribulation will be saved. In all these fateful signs it is easy to overlook some equally strong statements. Before the end comes the gospel will first be published among all nations, and the Master reaches the climax of his

prophecies and warnings in the words, "Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away."

THE CHRISTIAN'S DUTY—13:33-37

Now what is the Christian to do about all of this, much of which he does not understand? It ought to be clear that he has nothing to do with either the return of the Lord or the end of the age; his activities, therefore, must be in other fields. Well, it isn't strange that Jesus recognized that fact and outlined to his disciples a course which they could and must pursue. Nowhere does the Master issue a command that can't be carried out; he doesn't do it here. Note the simplicity of his words. Since we do not know "when the time is," we are to take heed, watch, and pray. Alertness is to be the characteristic of the Christian. The word "watch" occurs four times in these five closing verses of the chapter. It is as if Jesus were saying, "I have been talking about matters of tremendous importance; I am not surprised that you are confused, for most of what I have said is outside the range of your experience; you will understand it better later on. Meantime it is yours to be on the alert, watching and praying; leave the rest to me and to my Father."

In a beautifully simple and easily understandable comparison the Master cautions against surprise. He likens the situation about which he has been talking to a man who went on a far journey. Before leaving he turned over the house and other property to his servants, giving to each one his particular work, and he commanded the porter to keep watch. Since the servants did not know the time of the return of the master of the house, it behooved them to watch, for he might come at evening or at midnight or at

the early cockcrowing or in the morning. Coming suddenly, he might find them sleeping.

The meaning of this teaching is clear, and its significance is obvious. The servant's responsibility is plain; it is his business to watch. "And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch."

LAST LOVE FEAST—14:1-9

I am glad that we can close this study with one of the most precious scenes in the life of Jesus. Those who represent Jesus' life on earth as a thoroughly happy one are not altogether convincing. We know that Jesus was a radiant personality; we are sure that he enjoyed his friends. But on the whole his was a pretty dreary life among men. Always he was conscious that the influential people hated him and were ever on the alert to find some fault in him; in fact the leaders of this group plotted his death almost from the beginning of his ministry. Those closest to him, with few exceptions, were not dependable; it seems that not more than two or three of his followers had sufficient spiritual discernment to walk with him sympathetically; his was a pretty lonely life. We may thank God for those who made his path brighter, who cheered him by their devotion, and gladdened his heart by their loyalty. Among the few who enjoyed membership in this circle were the sisters Martha and Mary and their brother Lazarus. Their humble home was always a real haven for Jesus, and their love brightened his days.

We turn now to Mark 14:1-9, and we shall forget for the moment that the chief priests and the scribes in Jerusalem are plotting his death, and we shall give ourselves wholeheartedly to the little village of Bethany, some two miles around the mountain, and to the acts of affection

showered upon Jesus as a last token of the devotion of a faithful few. In my opinion there was only one anointing in Bethany, and it took place on Tuesday evening and is described briefly in this chapter. The scene is the home of Simon called the leper, whom Jesus had cured of his terrible malady. The guests include the disciples, Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, and doubtless other followers and friends of Jesus in Bethany. For once Jesus was in the house of his friends, who were anxious to do him reverent honor before it was too late.

The idea of the feast was Mary's. Somehow her intuition had told her that Jesus was not going to be with them much longer; her loyal heart longed to do something to show her love for him. She borrowed the house of her neighbor, and from other neighbors she borrowed all the finery of little Bethany. She had prepared the guest list and supervised the preparation of the menu and the arrangements for the banquet. Surely Mary was the busiest and happiest person there. Only hostesses can know her joy as she realized that everyone invited was present, that every item of the dinner was delicious, and that Jesus was enjoying himself. But her happiness demanded more than this. She was the only one who seemed to sense the spiritual nature of Jesus' ministry; she alone had the conviction that this was their last chance to show their love. Without attracting attention Mary noiselessly slipped out, ran across to her home, and from her own chest of treasures took out her most precious possession—a very costly vial of perfume which she was doubtless holding for that important event toward which all young women look. Hurriedly and happily she returned and made her way to the presence of Jesus. Before anyone could sense her purpose, she crushed the slender neck of

the alabaster box and poured out its fragrant contents all over the person of Jesus. Wonderful expression of consuming love!

The businessmen present, particularly the chairman of the Finance Committee, spoiled Mary's joy by their stupid criticism. They complained of the waste, said the ointment might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and the proceeds given to the poor—and they kept murmuring against her. (Right then, you will recall, Judas was planning to sell Jesus for thirty pieces of silver.) Can you imagine how Mary felt? Her perfect day was spoiled; she stood with head down; her whole being shook with hurt humiliation. How fine it is to see Jesus, the perfect gentleman, come to her rescue. He told them to shut up, rebuked them for troubling her, and told them that she had wrought a good work which amounted to the anointing of his body for burial; he then pronounced upon her a lasting memorial.

Space forbids lengthy discussion, but I would call attention to the fact that the story of Mary contains all we need to know on the subject of stewardship. Note the four elements of service in her act: first, the timeliness of service—tomorrow would have been too late, for Jesus was then in the hands of his enemies; second, the motive for service—Mary gave because she loved, the motive that sent Jesus to earth, and the constraining power in all Christian endeavor; third, the measure of service—"She hath done what she could," all that our Master has ever expected of any of his followers; fourth, the reward for service—Mary's reward is a memorial in the heart of the world for her surpassingly beautiful act.

Would it not be well for each one of us to check our

stewardship by these standards? I am persuaded that all of us are delinquent in the matter of timeliness of service. We mean to do so many things, and we put them off until it is too late. If you have a visit to make, a letter to write, a good word to say, a service to perform, do it now; it may be too late tomorrow.

Why do we do what we do in the church? That is a most pertinent question, for the motives for service are numerous. Any motive short of love for Jesus is unworthy, and any motive added to love for Jesus is superfluous. The Master wants no service from anyone except that service be rendered in love.

Isn't Jesus' measure of service marvelous? Only he has such a standard of measurement. We are responsible for our own ability, and the one who does his best, even though that best be little, receives the same commendation as the one whose best amounts to a great deal. It should be kept in mind that there is in this standard nothing to comfort the loafer or the self-satisfied. The responsibility for developing our God-given capacities is ours, the commendation of Jesus comes only to those who do what they can.

Do you believe in rewards? Jesus does. I do not believe in working for rewards, but it is proper to rejoice in them as Jesus bestows them. No follower of Jesus ever received a more glorious reward than was Mary's, and yet the service which she performed is within the range of all of us. It is a good time to take stock of our stewardship.

SUGGESTIVE

It is one of the strange things in religious experience that so many people find fascination in discussing subjects about which it is possible to know little or nothing—and

too often the service of such people ends with abstract discussion. We all know people who will argue for hours about tithing and who will say honestly that if they could be convinced that they had to tithe they would gladly give a tithe. In the meantime the cause of Christ languishes and they do not give a dime. The practical man avoids abstractions and insists upon giving more than a tithe just because he loves his Lord.

Do you know anyone who can tell you when the world is coming to an end? Deal gently with such, and remember that some of the most pathetic and pitiful chapters in history are those which record the effects of following false prophets in this field. It is none of man's business to fix the time of the end of things; his task lies in a much clearer and less spectacular role, concerning which he need not be in doubt if he will only read the Gospels.

The Second Coming of Christ—or the Return of Our Lord, as I prefer to call it, and as Jesus seems to think of it—is one of the glorious doctrines of the New Testament. The glory of the doctrine is in the fact that *he is coming again*. I am afraid that many preachers and teachers neglect this doctrine just because extremists have made it ridiculous. Leaders everywhere ought to give to our people the strength and comfort of this great doctrine, confining themselves, if I may say so, to what Jesus himself taught about it. In our finite wisdom and our almost infinite foolishness, however, we would at times overrule the infinite wisdom of God and proclaim the exact time of his coming. This has been done hundreds of times in the face of the very plain words of this passage that only God himself knows the time. Frankly, I sympathize with the opinion often expressed that the signs of our times seem to point

JESUS URGES WATCHFULNESS

to the early return of our Lord, and I confess that to me it seems that only the return of the Lord to the earth can meet the needs of our terribly needy world. Maybe that return is near. God's will be done!

Even at the risk of being misunderstood, I venture a suggestion which I believe practical minds will consider. For all practical purposes, if the Lord tarries, death marks the time of the second coming of Christ to the individual. That is to say, death marks the end of the period in which the individual may prepare for the return of the Lord. No; I did not say that the Lord returns at the death of the individual; I do say that death is a very final thing in the matter of carrying out the Lord's injunctions with reference to his coming. Therefore to be prepared to die is to be prepared for the coming of Christ. The average man admits that everybody else is going to die, but somehow he refuses to include himself among those to whom that experience must come. To be daily ready to die is to be ready for the Lord's return.

The Christian should pray for, long for, work for, expect the coming of Christ. What would you do if you knew Jesus would return today? It would be a fine thing if each one of us could say, "I would go right on about my business, happy in the thought that what I am trying to do is for the glory of God."

JESUS BETRAYED, DENIED, AND CONDEMNED

Mark 14:10-15:20

THE MEMORIAL SUPPER BOTH REBUKES AND CONSTRAINS

A SEARCHING PASSOVER—14:10-21

Lesson of Humility
The Tragic Question
Betrayal Revealed

A LONELY AGONY—14:32-42

Hunger for Companionship
The Flesh Fails
Gethsemane Alone

A GLORIOUS MEMORIAL—14:22-25

The Simple Elements
The Clear Significance
The Prophetic Note

A HUMILIATED CHRIST—14:43-72

Betrayal and Arrest
Ecclesiastical Trials
Peter's Denials

A PRECIOUS FELLOWSHIP—14:26-31

Triumphant Song
Weary Procession
Gracious Words

A CONTROLLED COURT—15:1-20

Conspirators and Tools
The Vulnerable Judge
Justice Weeps

JESUS ABOLISHED THE NECESSITY OF SUFFERING ALONE

This is a lengthy passage—too lengthy for intensive study—but it bears on one subject, and I want us to think together about the main facts, and in our private study go more into details. We shall have in mind the thoughts of the outline. Always in the observance of the Lord's Supper we shall not be able to get away from the thought that our Lord knew that we would forget him if he did not leave the Supper as a memorial—and often we forget him anyhow! Then we shall be comforted in the thought that since

Jesus suffered in Gethsemane it has never been necessary for any Christian to suffer alone—he suffers with his own.

A SEARCHING PASSOVER—14:10-21

Following the anointing in Bethany, and possibly smarting under the rebuke administered by Jesus, Judas went to the ecclesiastical authorities in Jerusalem and arranged, for a consideration, to deliver Jesus to them at a convenient time when there would be no occasion to fear the multitude. Mark makes it clear that these religious leaders were most willing; they were glad and readily promised the money. The next evening Jesus served as host to the disciples in the observance of the last Passover. Always a solemn feast, it was particularly so this time. In preparation for the feast Jesus, in response to inquiry from the disciples as to where they would eat the Passover, sent two of them into a city, telling them to follow a man whom they would meet carrying a pitcher of water until he entered a house. Then they should say to the man of the house that the Master wanted to know about the guest room in which he and his disciples would eat the Passover. He told them further that the goodman of the house would show them a large upper room furnished and prepared. The disciples obeyed and found everything as Jesus had said, and proceeded to make all necessary arrangements. I shall make no effort to reduce to words the emotions that surged in the heart of the Master and in the hearts of the individual disciples. Our imaginations, however, will help us to catch something of the atmosphere of that solemn evening.

Borrowing from the other records, it appears that no provision had been made for a servant to bathe the feet of

the guests, and each disciple felt that he could not afford to run the risk of lowering his position by performing this menial service. Too bad when a man's sense of self-importance keeps him from rendering immortal service. When Jesus came in, he sensed the situation and immediately took a towel and a basin of water and washed the disciples' feet himself. A really big personality can perform even the lowest service without loss of self-respect or of prestige. Silent rebuke and generous service reach high ground when Jesus bathes Judas' feet, and human selfishness redeems itself in part in Simon's genuine outburst. It is a pity that the beauty of this incomparable example of tender humility should be obscured by the efforts of some to make of it a church ordinance; divested of twisted interpretations, it warms our hearts and fills them with purest fraternal affection and solicitude.

In the course of the Passover meal Jesus startled the serious little company with the appalling announcement that one of them was going to betray him. In heartbreaking unanimity eleven of them exclaimed, "Is it I?"—while the guilty tones of Judas in the same question were lost in the chorus of their distress. In response to their inquiry Jesus revealed the betrayer, but in such manner, apparently, that only Judas understood what the Master meant. When the betrayer left the room, the eleven seem to have known the nature of the mission on which he went. Tragic and final breaking of a hallowed circle!

A GLORIOUS MEMORIAL—14:22-25

The last Passover has been eaten; the meal merges into the Memorial Supper. While they still ate, Jesus took some of the unleavened bread and blessed it and broke it and

gave to the disciples and told them to eat it, that it was his body. Also he took the cup and gave thanks and passed it to them, and they all drank of it. He then explained that the cup was his blood of the new testament, which was shed for many. Does anyone believe for a moment that a single disciple got the idea that he was eating the flesh of Jesus and drinking his blood? Again unwarranted interpretations would rob this holy scene of the perfectly clear meaning of two of the most striking metaphors in the sacred record; the bread merely represented his body, while the cup stood for his blood.

I feel also that it is one of the tragedies of history that the Lord's Supper has been the occasion of the bitterest controversies and bloodiest wars. Some have held and still hold that the bread and the wine are turned miraculously into the flesh and blood of Jesus every time the ordinance—sacrament to them—is observed. Others insist that, while no miracle actually takes place, the communicant does receive spiritual strength by partaking of the elements. Still others hold that the Supper is a symbolic memorial, that the elements are plain bread and fruit of the vine, and that in partaking of them we discern our Lord's broken body and shed blood and show forth his death till he come again; we thus use the ordinance as a means of remembering our crucified Lord and the promise of his return.

A PRECIOUS FELLOWSHIP—14:26-31

The first Memorial Supper has been observed; the disciples have listened and obeyed in silent lack of understanding of its deepest meaning. Presently its full significance will dawn upon them, and they will treasure every detail of this fateful evening to the end of their lives and

pass on to their successors the consolations of this priceless ordinance. When supper was over they sang a hymn (psalm) and went out to the Mount of Olives. Some years ago I asked a leader of a certain group of another denomination what was the difference between his branch and the other branches of his denomination, and he said, "The principal difference is, we sing the psalms" (pronounced "sams"). I suppose the practice is derived from this scene. I like to think that this company stood and Jesus led them in a favorite psalm of triumph—and just around the way was Gethsemane. Jesus faced Gethsemane with a song, thus teaching us how to meet our severest trials.

Somewhere between the conclusion of the supper the entrance into Gethsemane, Jesus spoke the gracious words of John 14-16 and uttered his incomparable prayer of intercession, the real Lord's Prayer. Also somewhere in this interval he found time to speak a few words of caution to the disciples. Quoting Zechariah 13:7, Jesus told them that that very night the shepherd would be smitten and the sheep scattered, and that they should be offended because of him. As always, however, when speaking of his or their suffering, the Master closed with an optimistic word, saying that after he was risen he would go before them into Galilee. (These words are confirmed in Mark 16:7.)

I am perfectly sure that the disciples did not understand the Master's meaning; they caught only the reference to what they might suffer. This gave Peter the chance to declare his loyalty. He insisted that he would not be offended though all the others were. Jesus answered him with the deliberate ("Verily I say") assertion that he would deny his Master three times before the second crowing of the cock (the means of reckoning the hours). Peter replied

most vehemently that even though he should die he would in no wise deny his Lord—and so said all the disciples. I believe these disciples meant every word that they spoke; my heart goes out in sympathy in their bewilderment.

A LONELY AGONY—14:32-42

“The Lonely Christ” is a tragic, almost pathetic, figure; truly he has “trodden the winepress alone.” The human side of the Master manifests itself in his hunger for companionship, and yet he was never more alone than when in the company of even his closest friends, for they simply could not enter into his feelings and share his experiences. In a measure, a very small measure, we understand, because there are times when we must be alone no matter how many are around; there are experiences that cannot be shared. The hunger for companionship remains nevertheless.

Stationing eight of the disciples at the entrance to Gethsemane, he took the members of the Inner Circle into the garden with him and, leaving them at a watching place, went forward a little and fell on the ground and prayed for the will of the Father to be done. Three times he prayed and as many times returned to the three, only to find them asleep. His trusted disciples failed him in his hour of need.

The inspired Word makes every possible allowance for the delinquency of the disciples—“the flesh is weak,” “their eyes were heavy”—but the fact remains that Jesus suffered alone; alone he sweat as it were great drops of blood; alone he asked that the cup might pass from him; alone he sought and found the Father’s will; alone he shouldered the burden of a world’s sins; alone he faced resolutely the agony of Calvary. “Sleep on now” gathers up the longing, the

yearning, the disappointment, the loving rebuke of the compassionate Saviour.

A HUMILIATED CHRIST—14:43-72

The night and morning following were periods of great humiliation for Jesus; I find myself wishing that he might have escaped the apparently unnecessary indignities of that terrible night. In the first place, he was seized as though he had been a common thief. The motley multitude, willing hirelings of ecclesiastical dignitaries, roughly armed, and led by Judas, sought him out as they would have pursued a notorious criminal, unmindful of the fact that he had taught daily in the Temple and could have been taken any time—but for fear of the people. The traitorous kiss of Judas must have brought the blush of shame and humiliation to the sensitive cheek of the outraged Christ, and his dejection of loneliness must have been complete when the disciples forsook him and fled. Sad to contemplate!

Judas's betrayal is commonly called the blackest crime in history, and so it is. But I would remind you that Judas has no monopoly on betrayals. We have never had the chance to betray the person of Christ; but opportunities of betrayal in the spirit are all about us, and too many of us take advantage of them. The conformist in the social circle, the money-grabber in business, the stickler for regularity in politics—these and many other classes are often found in the ranks of modern betrayers. Wouldn't it be a wonderful thing if every Christian would put loyalty to Christ above every other loyalty of life? In such event there would never be any conflicts among life's highest loyalties.

Returning to the lonely figure in the garden, I am forced to say that the Master's humiliation is only begin-

ning. Before daybreak, and therefore illegally, and before ecclesiastical courts which have no jurisdiction he is accused by purchased witnesses, no two of whom can agree in their testimony; he confesses positively that he is the Christ and is branded as a blasphemer; he is subjected to the coarse humor of a cowardly rabble who spit on him and cover his face and strike him and ask him to disclose by prophecy the one who has struck him. Great sport these fiends provide for themselves! Did ever human infamy and craven cowardice sink so low?

Even more trying than any of these experiences were the denials of Simon Peter. Warming himself by the enemy's fires, taunted by the accusing thrusts of serving maids and bystanders, this rugged, honest-hearted disciple reverted to his fisherman's vocabulary and cursed and swore in declaring that he did not know Jesus. Peter's is a strange case, an interesting study in psychology. He illustrates what Paul meant when he said, "But what I hate, that do I." (Rom. 7:15.) To deny Jesus was the last thing that Peter intended to do. He had vowed vehemently that he would not do it. He followed his arrested Lord even to the court of the place of mockery and shame. The enemy's fires, however, were too hospitable; the jeers of the hangers-on gave him no assurance; the thing he had sworn that he could not do, the thing that he hated, that he did. The second crowing of the cock aroused Peter and reminded him of what Jesus had said—and Peter wept when he thought of it. We cannot begin to conceive the depth of the wound this assertion made in the Master's heart; humiliation only mildly expresses it.

Failure, of course, is bad any time, but circumstances make some failures worse than others because the conse-

quences are greater. This chapter records some critical failures. Judas, the colossal failure of all history, completed his failure here; the Inner Circle of disciples missed their blessed opportunity of sharing the Master's loneliness; the entire company of disciples showed the white feather and forsook Jesus in his hour of arrest; Peter, following Jesus afar off, made the greatest failure of his life. The failure of the man in a trusted position of honor and leadership is always critical.

A CONTROLLED COURT—15:1-20

Let us keep in mind, of course, that the trials heretofore mentioned were entirely preliminary, or merely for the gratification of the dignitaries who hated Jesus. The ecclesiastical courts did not have the authority to impose the death penalty, but the Roman governor did. Almost from the beginning of the Master's earthly ministry a group of Pharisees and scribes had sought his death. This group had grown in hatred and in numbers until now they would stop at nothing to accomplish their purpose. They had broken down the barriers that ordinarily divided the ecclesiastics and now were completely united by their common hatred of the Man of Galilee. Like most of their kind before and since their day, they would not do the dirty work themselves. It has never been difficult to find those who could be manipulated as tools in the hands of unscrupulous leaders. Very often the guilty in our most outrageous crimes go free, while their hirelings pay the penalty.

In this case there is no evidence of corrupt use of money or of any other material influence. The pious leaders had sufficient regard for the people to respect their devotion to feast days and ceremonials. This fact of itself may have

made it easier for them to use the masses for their own selfish purposes. Ignorance, bigotry, prejudice, and the desire to stand in with important people were the elements upon which the unscrupulous leaders must rely in their diabolical planning. No one of "the multitude" or of "the people" had anything against Jesus; on the contrary, his ministry had emphatically and compassionately included them, and the common people gave him glad audience. In spite of all this, we know how easy it is for designing people to mobilize the so-called "have-nots" and to use them for purely selfish purposes. Such constituted the most valuable tool of the conspirators.

Second only to these in importance, and essential if these were to be of any value, was Pilate himself, the representative of the Roman government. His one ambition apparently was to keep down anything that would embarrass him at Rome. His personal character and his official administration were such that he did not care for his Jewish subjects to report to Rome. A vulnerable public official is about the poorest stick upon which justice can lean and at the same time is a most helpless instrument in the hands of those who would use him for unworthy ends. Pilate could not stand an investigation; Pilate feared anything that smacked of resistance to the established order; Pilate trembled at the thought of a rival to the emperor arising in his province; Pilate was indeed a vulnerable judge, and right well did the Jews know it.

The Roman soldiers were a third tool in the hands of the schemers. It was not necessary to give much thought to them, since they were entirely subject to Pilate's orders and could be depended upon to execute any decisions which the court might hand down. Their role was in line

with their professional duties, which in this case were performed with more than mere precision—they injected a bit of coarse burlesque into their regular routine which added nothing to the reputation of their country as a law-respecting empire.

With this setting before us it is easy to understand the details of this most important and final trial. As soon as morning came the whole Jewish council, led by the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes, after consultation, bound Jesus, carried him from their own meeting place, and turned him over to Pilate, who knew that the chief priests had delivered Jesus on account of envy. Pilate immediately asked Jesus if he was King of the Jews, and Jesus answered in the affirmative. Once again Pilate addressed Jesus, as he was silent in the face of the many accusations made by the chief priests, and asked him if he had no reply to make to the things they witnessed against him, and Jesus answered not a word. Pilate marveled. Of course he did; he had not seen anything like this in his judicial experience.

From Jesus, Pilate turned to the throng of Jews before him. It was customary at this feast time to release a prisoner, whom the people should name. There were two famous prisoners in confinement: Jesus, whom Pilate considered at worst as a fanatic, innocent of any breaking of the law; and Barabbas, notorious insurrectionist and murderer. The people asked Pilate to follow the custom as he had always done. He then asked if he should release unto them the King of the Jews, hoping doubtless that this would prove a way out. The mob, coached beforehand by the chief priests, asked that he release Barabbas. Pilate, still grabbing at straws, asked what they wanted him to do unto him whom they called King of the Jews. They yelled again,

"Crucify him!" Pilate, in almost the attitude of pleading the cause of Jesus, wanted to know what evil he had done, and they kept crying exceedingly, "Crucify him!" Well, it wasn't much of a trial. As Dr. Robertson says, "It was like a gladiatorial show with all thumbs turned down."

The fiasco is over; the judge is ready to render his decision. Pilate is a pitiable object; he holds a position of great authority and influence in the world, but he is not his own; his masters demanded service and got it. Mark expresses it exactly when he says that because Pilate wanted to please the people he gave the order that Barabbas be released and that Jesus be scourged and then crucified. Imagine the judge of a court giving a decision for the purpose of pleasing the people; no clearer case of miscarriage of justice is on record. Unhappy any people whose courts can be swayed by anything except the law and the evidence—such people are slaves.

Proper consideration for even human decency would have spared Jesus these next few scenes. He is now out of the hands of the Jews; they have forced the death sentence, and it is left to the Roman authorities to see that it is carried out; Jesus is committed to the soldiers, who usually behave better than these did. Possibly to curry further favor with the mob, or maybe to provide diversion for themselves, they led Jesus into the governor's palace and, after they had summoned the whole band or cohort of soldiers, staged a mock coronation, with the condemned man as the center of the ceremony. Note the steps of their mockery. They removed his clothing and clothed him with a purple or scarlet robe, which was a short cloak worn by officials and rulers. They then wove a crown out of the thorns which they found in the palace grounds

and placed it upon his head. This crown was more like a victor's garland than a royal diadem, but such distinctions were unimportant to those who were bent upon ridicule and mockery. For sceptor Matthew says (27:29) they put a reed, a stalk of common cane grass, in his hands. Thus Jesus stood before them in dignified humiliation.

Roman soldiers were familiar with the *Ave Caesar*—suggestive of the "Heil Hitler" of our day—so they began to hail Jesus as King of the Jews. Then some of them hit him on the head with a reed, others spit upon him, while still others bowed their knees in mock worship. Great sport this, significant at once of the grossness and the inhumanity of a cowardly crowd of armed officers against an unarmed, defenseless man. Great courage that!

When they had satisfied their diabolical sense of fun, they removed the purple, put Jesus' own clothes back on him, and led him out to be crucified. Surely Justice wept over these proceedings, while the silence and dignity of the tortured victim rebuked all concerned.

JESUS CRUCIFIED

Mark 15:21-47

ONE LOOK AT THE CROSS EMPTIES MAN OF SELF

THE CRUCIFIXION—15:21-28

Via Dolorosa
Details of Execution
Partners in Death

SINCERE WITNESSES—15:39-41

The Centurion
Faithful Few
Many Others

SOME PASS BY—15:29-32

The Railing
The Mocking
The Reviling

THE ENTOMBMENT—15:42-47

Need for Haste
Joseph's Services
Silent Watchers

TERRIFIC SCENES—15:33-38

Midnight at Noon
The Dying Christ
The Rent Veil

SUGGESTIVE

Man at His Worst
Superb Courage
Calvary's Meaning

CHRIST'S DEATH IS MADE VAIN ONLY BY MAN'S REJECTION

With bared heads and bowed hearts we approach the event to which Jesus looked and for which he came to earth; we are indeed on holy ground. Mark's record is not nearly as complete as some of the others, and of course it is perfectly proper to draw on these parallel accounts for the full narrative. In our study we need not be interested in the more or less academic question as to who crucified Jesus, since we shall have no interest in fastening blame

upon any sect or race. Clearly it would be foolish to hold descendants of any of those involved in the crucifixion responsible for the execution of our Lord. But this chapter cannot be understood without keeping in mind the hatred and persistency of the little group of ecclesiastics who used the irresponsible mob to compel the weak governor to order the crucifixion of Jesus. The various races and groups involved are entitled to whatever comfort they can get out of that statement; the truth of the statement is beyond dispute.

At the outset I call attention to the emphasis lines of the outline. The top line would call us to sober contemplation of the cross and its meaning for us. Surely no one of us can stand before the cross and find anything in us to commend us to God or even to ourselves. The bottom line suggests the tragedy of the failure of Christ's death through man's unbelief. Man's faith is the only thing that can make effective for him the death of our Saviour.

THE CRUCIFIXION—15:21-28

Leaving Pilate's judgment hall a strange procession formed to wind its weary way out beyond the city walls to a place called Golgotha, which means "place of a skull-shaped mound." Undoubtedly Jesus led the procession, accompanied closely by his military guards, and followed by a small group of devoted friends and a large company of enemies and rabble. Jesus, weary from the burdens of the last twenty-four hours and from the scourgings and indignities heaped upon him, bore his own rugged cross on his shoulder, as convicted criminals were required to do; he also wore around his neck a placard describing his crime. There is no evidence that Jesus fell under the burden of his cross, but there is ample justification for the

inference that because of his weakness from both physical and mental suffering he was unable to carry the heavy load. By chance, or maybe providentially, there passed that way one Simon, of Cyrene, a town of Libya, who is identified by Mark as the father of Alexander and Rufus. Since the names of these sons were very common ones, the identification throws no additional light on Simon. At any rate, he enjoyed the enviable distinction of being pressed into service and forced to carry the cross of Jesus on out to the place of crucifixion. I have always envied this foreigner; I believe I could have carried that cross. After this brief delay, the procession re-forms; the personally interested and the idly curious jostle one another through the narrow street, henceforth to become known as the road of sorrows.

Scholars are not agreed as to the exact location of Golgotha, or Calvary (its Latin equivalent), but the best opinion seems to be that the present Gordon's Calvary, just north of the city wall, is the original Golgotha. When they reached this place, the soldiers offered him a drink of wine or vinegar flavored with gall or myrrh, which produced a narcotic and stupefying effect. Such drink was prepared usually by compassionate women for the purpose of deadening the pain of the convict. Jesus declined the drink, preferring doubtless to suffer his voluntary death with feelings and senses unimpaired.

Artists have given us a wrong conception of the physical crucifixion. It is not difficult to visualize the facts. The cross resembled what we would call a post, some ten or twelve feet long, with a rough crosspiece nailed to it about a foot from the top. The post was placed flat upon the ground with the end very near the hole into which the cross was presently and suddenly to be dropped. The

victim was stretched out upon the cross, his hands were nailed to the crosspiece, while his feet were lapped over each other and nailed to the upright piece. The identification placard which the convicted man had worn around his neck was now nailed to the top of the cross; its full inscription was, "This is Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews." John says it was written in three languages: Latin, Hebrew, and Greek. Then the soldiers got under the burden and slipped it down into the posthole prepared to receive it. Can't you hear the thud as the cross falls into place? Almost unconsciously there comes to mind the plaintive inquiry of the loved spiritual, "Were you there when they crucified my Lord?"

Custom permitted the soldiers to appropriate the garments of the executed ones. Accordingly they divided among themselves the articles of wearing apparel until they came to the beautiful robe, and they gambled for this. (From this scene Lloyd Douglas gets the title for his strong novel, *The Robe*.) The details are over, and we are told that it was the third hour, or nine o'clock in the morning by our reckoning.

Tragic enough was this scene, but there was more. On either side of Jesus two robbers deserving the death penalty were crucified. Dr. Robertson thinks it more than likely that these were members of the band of Barabbas, upon whose cross Jesus now hung. Thus was the scripture (Isa. 53:12) fulfilled, that he should be "numbered with the transgressors."

SOME PASS BY—15:29-32

I question whether a sorrier spectacle was ever presented than that produced by the various groups that passed by or

around the cross after the crucifixion was completed. First the passers-by, with tongues loose at both ends—"wagging their heads"—quoted tauntingly some of Jesus' sayings and dared him to come down from the cross. "Ah yes," they said, "you are the fellow who said he would destroy the Temple and build it again in three days; come down from the cross and save yourself." Brilliant words and thoroughly indicative of their complete ignorance of the teaching of the Master and of the issues involved! It looks as if the rabble could have at least kept their mouths shut, doesn't it? But no; leaders of the dominant party were present, and here was a chance to show off which common humanity could not resist. They would use words which they thought would be pleasing to the aristocracy whether the users of the words knew the meaning or not. So they railed on, enjoying themselves in the railing.

The chief priests, impressed by the spectacle of their sycophantic underlings, but unwilling to share their sentiments with the common herd, reserved their very important observations for themselves and their social equals and fellow conspirators, the scribes. Mockingly they said among themselves but in the hearing of Jesus that he had saved others but could not save himself. Of course they did not dream that they were speaking the literal truth. He could not save himself and others too. That others might be saved he himself must die. We can hear their pompous grunts and see their scornful faces as they said that it was a good time for this King of Israel to assert his kingship by coming down from the cross. As a special inducement they held out the possibility that by so doing he might win some worth-while followers in the persons of no less important folks than themselves. Ahem! It is to laugh. In the

light of the true facts, was ever anything more ridiculous? But they mocked on, unembarrassed by the vacuity of their own strut.

There were two others whose circumstances prevented them from passing by; they could only look on from their stationary positions. But they must join in the general tirade. So the robbers who were being crucified with Jesus reviled him too. Yes, it was about unanimous. No word of sympathy for the dying victim passed from a single mouth; no one recalled the services of Jesus in behalf of his own or offered the suggestion of his innocence. In his last hours Jesus was surrounded by a cross section of railing, mocking, reviling humanity; he must die with their blasphemous taunts in his ears.

TERRIFIC SCENES—15:33-38

When the sixth hour came, Jesus had been on the cross three hours; it was now noon, and darkness came over the whole land. Persons interested in the study of natural phenomena have sought to bring perfectly natural causes to account for the darkness, but in vain. This was not an eclipse of the sun. Luke does say (23:45) that the sun's light failed, but it merely means that the light of the sun at noonday was not strong enough to penetrate the dense darkness which lasted for three hours. Earth never experienced darkness like this; nature was simply providing sympathetic atmosphere for the extreme agony of her dying Creator. It was an unnatural phenomenon; anything else would have been surpassingly strange; nature was sensitive to this tragedy of tragedies.

At the close of the period of darkness, at three o'clock in the afternoon, Jesus uttered his unspeakable cry of

agony, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" There were seven sayings of Christ on the cross, and this is the only one recorded by Matthew and Mark; the other six, of course, are found in Luke and John. I hesitate to try to interpret this soul cry; but I suggest reverently that Jesus now realizes fully that the Father regards him as sin though sinless, that he is dying in the sinner's stead, that the face of God could not look upon the sinbearer. This is a good place for all of us to quote with sincere appreciation and profound gratitude the familiar words of John 3:16. The spectators misunderstood the word *Eloi* (God) for *Eleian* (Elijah) and said among themselves, "He is calling for Elijah." One man, prompted, we like to think, by a spark of compassion, ran and filled a sponge full of vinegar and offered Jesus a drink. John says that Jesus tasted it because he was very thirsty. It is said that the thirst of a man dying from crucifixion is intense beyond that of any other thirst. While the crowd gazed in noncomprehending manner, one bright fellow among them made articulate their stupidity by saying, "Let us watch and see whether Elias will hear his cry and come to take him down." Alas for our poor humanity! Possibly no one expected death to come so soon. Victims had often hung on the cross for longer than a day. Jesus did not die from exhaustion, nor do I think he died from a ruptured heart, as some have thought the loud cry indicated. I believe he simply, I should say divinely, yielded up his spirit, voluntarily even as he had said he had the power to do.

"And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom." In many respects this was the most significant of all the terrific happenings on that fateful day. On this point I quote from Dr. A. T. Robertson, to

whose *Word Pictures in the New Testament* I am so heavily indebted. After reminding us that Matthew connects this phenomenon with the earthquake ("the earth did quake"), Dr. Robertson says: "Josephus tells of a quaking in the temple before the destruction, and the Talmud tells of a quaking forty years before the destruction of the temple. Allen suggests that 'a cleavage in the masonry of the porch which rent the outer veil and left the Holy Place open to view would account for the language of the Gospels, of Josephus, and of the Talmud.' This veil was a most elaborately woven fabric of seventy-two twisted plaits of twenty-four threads each, and the veil was sixty feet long and thirty feet wide. The rending of the veil signified the removal of the separation between God and the people." Personal access to God was now a reality through faith in his crucified Son. The Christian, thank God, does not require the services of any human intermediary, priest, or pope; his approach to the throne is direct.

SINCERE WITNESSES—15:39-41

A saving feature or two redeems somewhat the human figures in this tragedy. The centurion, Roman ruler of a hundred men, was near the cross in his official capacity. He had seen many criminals die, and at first to him this was just another death. He may have been a witness to all that had taken place during the preceding night; he certainly heard the flings at Jesus with reference to his claim that he was the Son of God. He was undoubtedly impressed by the portents that he had seen and by the bearing of the crucified one in the face of such spleen as would be spared the vilest criminal that ever died. He heard Jesus' last words; he watched him die. No mere man ever died

like this, and the honest heart of the officer prompted him to say, "Truly this man was the Son of God." Because there is no article with "Son" in the Greek, the literal meaning is "God's Son," which could mean either "the Son of God" or "a son of God," probably the latter. If his exclamation meant that he was won by Christ's witness to trust Christ, he joined the other pagan, the robber on the cross, and found salvation as Jesus hung there. The cross, in all its wonderful significance, was beginning its work.

Others deserve special mention: Three women are mentioned by name: Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and Salome, the mother of James and John. We know that there were others who stood near the cross. John says (19:25), "Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother." We don't want to lose that picture of the little mother standing by as her first-born died the death of a convict. Only Luke makes reference to the feelings of these devoted women. He mentions that they returned smiting their breasts (23:48). Well, in an hour like that their grief was too deep for either words or tears. They just stood and looked; there was nothing else for them to do.

In addition to the small group of women mentioned there were many other women who had ministered unto him. These stood afar off, and silence reigned among them. This is a good place to emphasize the vital part that woman has always played in Christian service. "Last at the cross and first at the tomb" is an expression that undertakes to give recognition to woman's fidelity, but it doesn't go far enough. Women were loyally devoted and heartily responsive to the Master's cause all through his active personal ministry on earth. Practically all authorities agree that Mary

of Bethany had a spiritual conception of Jesus' mission surpassing the grasp of any other follower. The thoughtfulness of grateful women often made the path smoother and the going easier for the world's Burden-bearer. Deeds of women, illustrating their devotion, received special commendation from the Master, while the generous contributions of their substance financed his campaigns. So it has been throughout Christian history, and it is now; Christian women have ever been the active, inspiring human force in doing the Lord's work. We do well to give recognition to the debt we owe to woman's vision, intelligence, devotion, and sacrifice. Many of those who had followed him in Galilee and ministered unto him came up with him unto Jerusalem and stood by.

THE ENTOMBMENT—15:42-47

It is evening on Calvary; it is also the evening before the sabbath. This evening was known as the preparation, the word translated "the preparation" being the same word that in modern Greek is translated Friday. The Jewish sabbath, of course, began at 6:00 P.M. on Friday, and it was very desirable from the standpoint of the orthodox Jews that these bodies be taken down before that hour. Jesus had accomplished a surprisingly quick death, and it was not necessary in his case to do anything to hasten death. In John's more extended account (19:31-37) we are told that the Jews obtained permission from Pilate to make sure that these convicts were dead so that the bodies would not remain on the crosses on the sabbath, which was a "high day" with them. Accordingly the soldiers broke the legs of the malefactors hanging on either side of Jesus; but when they came to Jesus, they saw that he was already

dead, so they did not break his legs. One of the soldiers, however, did pierce the side of Jesus with his spear, and blood and water came out. Thus were at least two prophecies concerning Jesus fulfilled (Exod. 12:46; Zech. 12:10). Nothing better illustrates the slavery to form without any regard for the spirit than this particular fact. The Jews could hound the innocent Christ to death, but they must not profane the sabbath by leaving the body on the cross on the sabbath.

There is nothing in the record to justify the opinion that Joseph of Arimathea spoke for anyone but himself. His convictions concerning the sabbath were as positive as anyone's. I wish that I knew more about him. We have his name and the fact that he was from Arimathea, a Jewish city. We also know that he was a member of the Sanhedrin and had not voted for the crucifixion of Jesus. He was also a wealthy man, and a secret follower of Jesus, not openly declaring his discipleship because of fear of the Jews. (I would correct a rather common misapprehension here. It is nowhere said that Nicodemus was afraid of public opinion. Everywhere he is referred to as the one who came to Jesus "by night.") This influential Jew manifested excellent courage now, went in person to Pilate, and asked permission to take down the body of Jesus and bury it. Pilate could hardly believe that Jesus was dead. When he had received assurance of the centurion that Jesus was dead, he granted Joseph's request, and this noble soul—assisted by Nicodemus, according to John 19:39-41—took the body of Jesus down, wrapped it in fine linen which he had bought, placed it in his own private, new, rock-hewn sepulcher, and closed the tomb with a stone. The world, scholarly and otherwise, may say what it pleases about

Joseph; I could envy him the high privilege that was his and the beautifully gracious manner in which he performed this last service to the body of our Lord.

Our study closes with the simple statement that Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses (Matthew says "the other Mary") beheld where he was laid. Of course they did; and they knew where to find the tomb on the resurrection morning. No finer illustration of deep grief can be found than that exhibited by these silent women.

SUGGESTIVE

Just now our newspapers and magazines are filled with stories of heartless barbarity in the treatment of innocent, defenseless people by Germany and Japan. Our blood runs cold as we think of it; but this treatment, heartless as it is, cannot compare with that accorded the Son of God for no reason on earth except to gratify the very lowest and basest of the human instincts. It was enough to crucify one known to be innocent by every person who was aware of what was going on. Envy and hate brought about his death. Even semidecent humanity would have been content with this object accomplished. Not so with this crowd. They must laugh and sneer as they gloat over his suffering. Did someone say that there is no such thing as total depravity? Well, this certainly approaches totality.

In contrast with this noisy, rough, heartless cruelty we have the quiet courage of the Son of God. Are there yet doubts as to the deity of Jesus? Well, what are we going to do with this scene? Do you know any human being in history who would have endured what Jesus did without sign of resentment or retaliation? The centurion drew the only conclusion which reason and logic can accept—Jesus

was not a mere man; he did not behave like a man. Only the Son of God could die like that. Of course we cannot imitate such divine courage, but we can be ashamed of ourselves for the poor showing that we make under slight provocation, and we can pray for strength to behave as Jesus would have us, no matter what the provocation.

Don't let anyone tell you that Calvary is not important. The message of Calvary is the message of the finished plan for man's redemption. An acceptable sacrifice in the person of God's Son has been found, and he has died for man's sins and in man's place. It is therefore no longer necessary for man to rest under condemnation, and only man by his rejection of Christ can defeat man's salvation. This is the very essence of the gospel, and without it there is no gospel. It is our privilege to proclaim this truth and to urge all unsaved to put their trust in the crucified, risen, reigning Christ who alone can present them faultless before the Father's throne.

JESUS COMMISSIONS HIS DISCIPLES

Mark 16:1-20

GO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO EVERY CREATURE

SUNRISE VISIT—16:1-4

Purchase of Love
Anticipated Difficulty
Problem Removed

FINAL WORDS—16:14-18

The Eleven Rebuked
Great Commission
Miracles of Believers

ANGEL'S MESSAGE—16:5-8

Startling Information
Specific Command
Fearful Departure

TRIUMPHANT POWER—16:19-20

The Ascension
Seat of Authority
Victorious Obedience

REJECTED TESTIMONY—16:9-13

Mary's Testimony
Witness of Two
Unbelieving Disciples

SUGGESTIVE

Fact of Resurrection
Right to Command
Unexecuted Commands

EVERY COMMAND CARRIES POWER TO EXECUTE IT

I began this study of Mark's Gospel with great anticipation. Of course I was familiar with its general contents, but the beauty of the study of God's Book as compared with that of any mere book is that it is always fresh and new and practical. There isn't a chapter in the Bible that does not give out new light and life every time it is studied by the devout reader. How richly true this is of the life of Christ. My expectations so far as the treasure is con-

JESUS COMMISSIONS HIS DISCIPLES

cerned have been more than realized, and I have profited amazingly by my efforts at study. This last chapter is the shortest in this Gospel, which fact will make possible a bit fuller treatment of the matters of supreme importance that it contains. Teachers and students alike will drink in the great truths of these twenty verses, and the discussion here will be useful only as it makes it easier for all to grasp the meaning of the text.

It is entirely fitting that this last study should carry the missionary emphasis, for until the events of this last chapter had taken place there was only the message of a perfectly wonderful life which was ended on Calvary and put to rest in Joseph's tomb. The story of such a life would always have been fascinating and inspiring, but it would have been the story of a life that ended in defeat; there would have been no power to command and to sustain. When Jesus came out of the tomb, he demonstrated that he was more than man, and the power of his resurrection behind his words gave them significance beyond words ever spoken. One of the strongest evidences of the Resurrection is the fact that a group of frightened, timorous, despairing disciples suddenly became a conquering band of missionaries. Jesus' commands were very simple; his words are monosyllables and easily understood; and the field of his commands is so extensive that there is room for everyone who will obey. Best of all every command carries the power to execute it. As we study, it will not be out of order for each one of us to be honest enough with himself to check his own progress in carrying out the commands of our Lord.

SUNRISE VISIT—16:1-4

Preparatory to a visit to the tomb just as soon as it could be made, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome had purchased some sweet spices for the purpose of anointing the body of Jesus. I am not forgetting that Jesus had said that Mary of Bethany had anointed his body for burial; these would anoint it after burial. One or two of them had stood silently and watched the entombment of Jesus and had seen Joseph place the large stone before the sepulcher. They therefore knew where the tomb was, and did not hesitate to start out before daybreak. They came to the sepulcher just as the sun was rising on the first day of the week. This day, by the way, is never to be the same again. Right here is where the Jewish sabbath was abandoned by the Christians and the Resurrection Day became the Lord's Day in commemoration of his coming out of the tomb. I have many friends among the Adventists who hold to the seventh day as the Lord's Day, and occasionally someone writes in to ask the authority for observing the first day. Always I reply that so far as I know there is no command to observe the first day, that apparently by common consent the early Christians adopted the practice, evidently with the blessing of the Holy Spirit, and subsequent Christians have merely followed this precedent. To me the first day of the week is the Christian Sabbath, the Lord's Day, the day on which he rose from the dead; I would keep it holy.

On their way to the tomb the women remembered that a large stone had been placed in the entrance to the tomb—too large for them to handle—and they began to wonder among themselves how they would get it away. Mark

alone records the question, "Who shall roll us away the stone?" Many years ago I heard Dr. William H. Whitsitt preach a baccalaureate sermon from this text as a "point of departure." Most impressively he told us of the stones along life's way, and assured us that Jesus would provide the power to remove them. I don't know that others would call it a great sermon, but it is the only baccalaureate that I remember. Of course it never occurred to any one of these devout followers of Jesus that he had come out of the tomb. It is surpassingly strange that all disciples had overlooked this teaching as they saw fulfilled right before them everything else that Jesus had said about the end of his earthly ministry; only his enemies remembered the teaching of Jesus concerning the Resurrection. From the standpoint of the laws of evidence, this very fact supports the reality of the Resurrection.

Some say that it is perfectly natural for women to worry. I don't know that women have a monopoly here. My experience and observation teach me that people pretty generally are wont to anticipate difficulties or troubles. In this case their difficulty, like so many others that we fear, had disappeared when they got to it. When they were close enough and it was light enough, they saw that the stone was rolled away, and they were all the more impressed because they saw how big that stone was.

ANGEL'S MESSAGE—16:5-8

The sepulcher being open, they entered. I know enough about vaults and tombs to realize that they are built to accommodate, when necessary, as many as two or three bodies; it would not be difficult for a man or two to stand in an empty tomb. As the women entered, they saw a

young man clothed in a long white garment sitting on the right side of the tomb. Matthew says (28:2-5) that the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, rolled back the stone and sat upon it; he also says that his countenance was like lightning and his raiment was white as snow. Luke says (24:4) that two men in shining garments stood beside them. In these variations I see no contradictions; on the other hand, such details strengthen the personal narrations. We do not require even inspiration to tell us how this experience affected the women: they were simply petrified, as our vernacular has it. Of course the inspired record is more dignified and says that they were utterly "amazed" or "affrighted." Yes, we understand; we think we know about how they felt. Seeing that they were too frightened for words, the heavenly messenger sought to quiet them by urging them not to be afraid, and telling them that he knew they were looking for Jesus of Nazareth who had been crucified. Only Mark uses the phrase "of Nazareth," which Dr. Robertson says was for the purpose of identifying "Jesus" to the women. Frankly, I do not believe any such identification was needed; the women had only one person on their minds. Of course it helped to know that the stranger was acquainted with the nature of such an early visit to the tomb. They were not prepared, however, for the startling information that was to follow. He told them that Jesus had risen, that he was not there, and then invited them to inspect the place where they had laid his body.

I have an idea that no very thorough inspection was made, because these visitors were not in an inquisitive frame of mind. Furthermore, the words of the angel were followed immediately by some specific instructions which

they must carry out at once. They were to go their way and tell the disciples *and Peter*—Peter's heart must have been warmed when he heard that special word had been sent to him—that Jesus had gone into Galilee where he would meet them, as he had said, recalling here the words recorded in Matthew 26:32.

The women did not tarry but, amazed and trembling with fear, fled quickly from the sepulcher and told no man anything because they were afraid. Incidentally, the word "man," is in italics in the text, which means that it does not appear in the original. The women did not say a word to anyone, not even to themselves; they simply were not using words. This record does not sound much like the followers of Jesus invented the story of the Resurrection, does it? Neither does the remainder of the narrative. It is strange to what lengths the unbeliever will go to fortify himself in his unbelief.

REJECTED TESTIMONY—16:9-13

Mary Magdalene is one of my favorites; I resent vigorously the slurs that have been cast at her, and the efforts to smear her character. Mark says that she was the one "out of whom he [Jesus] had cast seven devils." That characterizes her; I do not know the nature of her affliction, except that it was severe, and I object to adding to her physical suffering the implication of immoral living. Art is probably responsible for the fact that we have Magdalene Homes and that fallen women are often designated as Magdalenes. I do know this, that Mary never forgot what Jesus had done for her and that she never lost an opportunity to show her love and devotion; she was indeed the grateful follower of her Lord. Jesus understood and gave

to her distinction which any one of the disciples could well covet; she was the first person to whom Jesus appeared after he came out of the tomb. Mark does not concern himself with the details of the beautiful interview in the garden, and I shall follow his account. Mark does say that Jesus appeared to Mary early on the first of the week. He also tells us that Mary went and told those that had been with him—the disciples. Mary had a great testimony to give to the disciples—the empty tomb, the risen Lord, her personal interview. We may be sure that each item of the report received proper embellishment at her hands as her excited, radiant personality gave itself in happy expression.

Two of their own number supported Mary's testimony. These had seen and talked with Jesus on the country road and at tea in their own home. The reference here, of course, is to the walk to Emmaus, recorded in full in Luke 24:13-22. These facts they gave to the other eight. There is no reason to question the reality of their testimony; in fact it would seem that the corroborating witness of these three was enough to convince even hostile hearers—but not so.

Instead of rejoicing in the anticipation of seeing their risen Lord and of grabbing at the first proof that he was alive, the disciples spent their time in mourning and weeping. They were a disconsolate, defeated crowd, and it required more than ordinary evidence to arouse them. In fact it appears that they were in no frame of mind to be convinced against their preconceived notions. The inspired writer merely observes, after the presentation of evidence separately by these witnesses, that the disciples just did not believe what they had heard. There is a vast difference

between ignorance seeking light and preconceived opinion closed to light; the disciples were suffering from the latter.

FINAL WORDS—16:14-18

Clearly the disciples were not expecting to see Jesus; equally clearly they must have been confused, if not impressed, by what their friends had told them. Only the presence of Jesus himself would convince them. While they were thus confused, and as they sat together, Jesus appeared unto them. His first words to them were words of rebuke because of the hardness of heart and unbelief that caused them to doubt those who had seen him after he had risen. It is noted that Jesus does not consider their doubt as a mark of intellectual superiority; the doubter may be perverse or just plain dumb. I have never seen as convincing evidence of faith upon the part of even sophisticated intellectuals as the present time offers. Everywhere men who have given themselves to specialized scientific research are saying that science is not enough, that science does not meet the heart needs, that science fails in the hour of supreme test or trial. This is one of the valuable by-products of war. Only the other day I heard of a brilliant young airman who, having taken his ship through a most hazardous flight, said, as he was about to land, "Thank you, Lord; I can take over now." That attitude reflects properly the spirit of sincere modern intellectuals.

Mark brings his narrative almost abruptly to a close with emphasis on the Great Commission and the Ascension. The other Gospels give a much fuller treatment. Immediately after administering the rebuke, Jesus commanded the disciples to go into all the earth (creation) and preach the gospel to every creature—a short, comprehensive, clear

command, which apparently every one of them accepted. That there should be no doubt as to the meaning of the gospel which they were to preach, Jesus stated the terms of salvation and the condition of damnation. Since Jesus knew the gospel, it is well to give emphasis to what he said: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." Clear and simple enough, don't you think? We agree with the scholars that the omission of baptism as a condition of damnation is evidence that men are condemned for unbelief and not for omission of baptism. Likewise salvation would rest on belief, as many corroborating scriptures teach.

The genuineness of verses 17-18 is seriously disputed. Dr. Robertson goes so far as to consider conclusive the proof against their genuineness. All will agree that Matthew's account (28:16-20) of the farewell words of Jesus is much more beautiful and appealing. If these verses are genuine, it would seem that they are only a bill of particulars for the general promise, "Ye shall have power." Genuine or otherwise, there is nothing particularly strange about the powers ascribed to Christians. New Testament Christians did cast out devils; they did speak with new tongues; they did heal the sick; in one or two cases they were unharmed by serpents; I recall no instance of it, but it is not unreasonable to assume that the accidental drinking of a deadly thing might not result fatally. The point, it would seem, is that the Christian possesses power that others do not have, and is expected to use it in the service of his Lord.

TRIUMPHANT POWER—16:19-20

The life of Jesus was a life of power; at every turn in his life, particularly in its closing days, power was mani-

fested. Jesus does not seem to contemplate a powerless Christian. Mark's account of the Ascension is only a statement of fact without regard to time, place, or incidents. We are indebted to Luke for the details. He tells us that the Ascension took place on Olivet, forty days after the Resurrection; and in Acts 1:9-11 he gives us a vivid description of the Ascension which contains also the certain promise of the Lord's bodily return to the earth. Jesus' return to the Father, without effort or display, is a marvelous exhibition of quiet power. Jesus was simply received up into heaven; he disappeared from their sight while they were looking on; his physical presence with them ceased.

Luke (Acts 7:55) supports Mark in placing Jesus at the right hand of the Father. This fact is tremendously significant since it assigns to Jesus the position of intercessory influence which he is to wield in behalf of those who put their trust in him. How comforting it is to the Christian to know that right now he has an Advocate at the right hand of the Father to represent him and plead his case before the Father. Jesus did not surrender his interest in his own when he returned to the Father; on the contrary he gave them a Comforter on earth and an Advocate in heaven.

The erstwhile mourning, weeping, doubting disciples were suddenly transformed into an aggressive band of conquering Christians. They got busy; they preached everywhere; they had the encouragement and assurance of the Lord working with them because his blessing confirmed the word. Well, that's victorious obedience. Their part of the commission was obedience; Jesus did the rest. Militant Christianity was underway. Somehow I have never thought of Christianity except as militant, and I am forced to the conclusion that the spinelessness of so much of modern

Christianity can be accounted for only by the fact that Christians will not obey their Lord; our Lord has the same power and is eager to use it if we will give him opportunity. The need of the hour? Why, that's easy: our supreme need is for Christians who have no better sense than to obey their Lord.

SUGGESTIVE

The Resurrection—the bodily resurrection, if you please—is easily one of the fundamental doctrines. If the body of Christ did not come out of the grave, it is still there and we worship a dead Christ. It does make a difference, a vast difference, whether there was such a thing as a resurrection, so-called liberal thinking to the contrary notwithstanding. The fact of the Resurrection is better attested than any other historical fact that is universally accepted. The testimony of the New Testament can't be brushed aside; the words of witnesses whose credibility has never been questioned cannot be ignored; the evidence for the Resurrection is stronger than that supporting the reality of Julius Caesar. But even stronger than that is the record of those who have believed in the Resurrection. Something transformed a helpless band of people grieving over a dead Christ into a flaming company of conquerors believing in a living Christ. What was it? Those who would deny the Resurrection must shoulder the responsibility of accounting for Christianity.

The earnest Christian never thinks of questioning the right of his Lord to command, and yet the unresponsiveness of even the best Christians to the perfectly plain commands of our Lord amounts to questioning if not repudiating his right to command. I like very much the state-

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ment of Mr. Robert Le Tourneau, "If God is who they say he is, he ought to make the best partner a fellow ever had." And so he ought; and yet most people that I know are thrilled over the prospect of securing as business associate some man of influence and ability, but too few seem to be aware that this "best partner a fellow ever had" is available to all who would claim his services. Mr. Le Tourneau had such awareness, took God into partnership, and does a gross business of between thirty and forty million a year. This big businessman insists that he is only a mechanic and that his Partner is responsible for the success of the firm. This insistence is more than verbal; Mr. Le Tourneau pays to God 90 per cent of the income and retains 10 per cent for himself. That looks like tithing backwards, but it works. By reason of creation, redemption, empowering, and guiding, God has supreme right to command; but his own infinite, wise, patient, considerate self re-enforces that right.

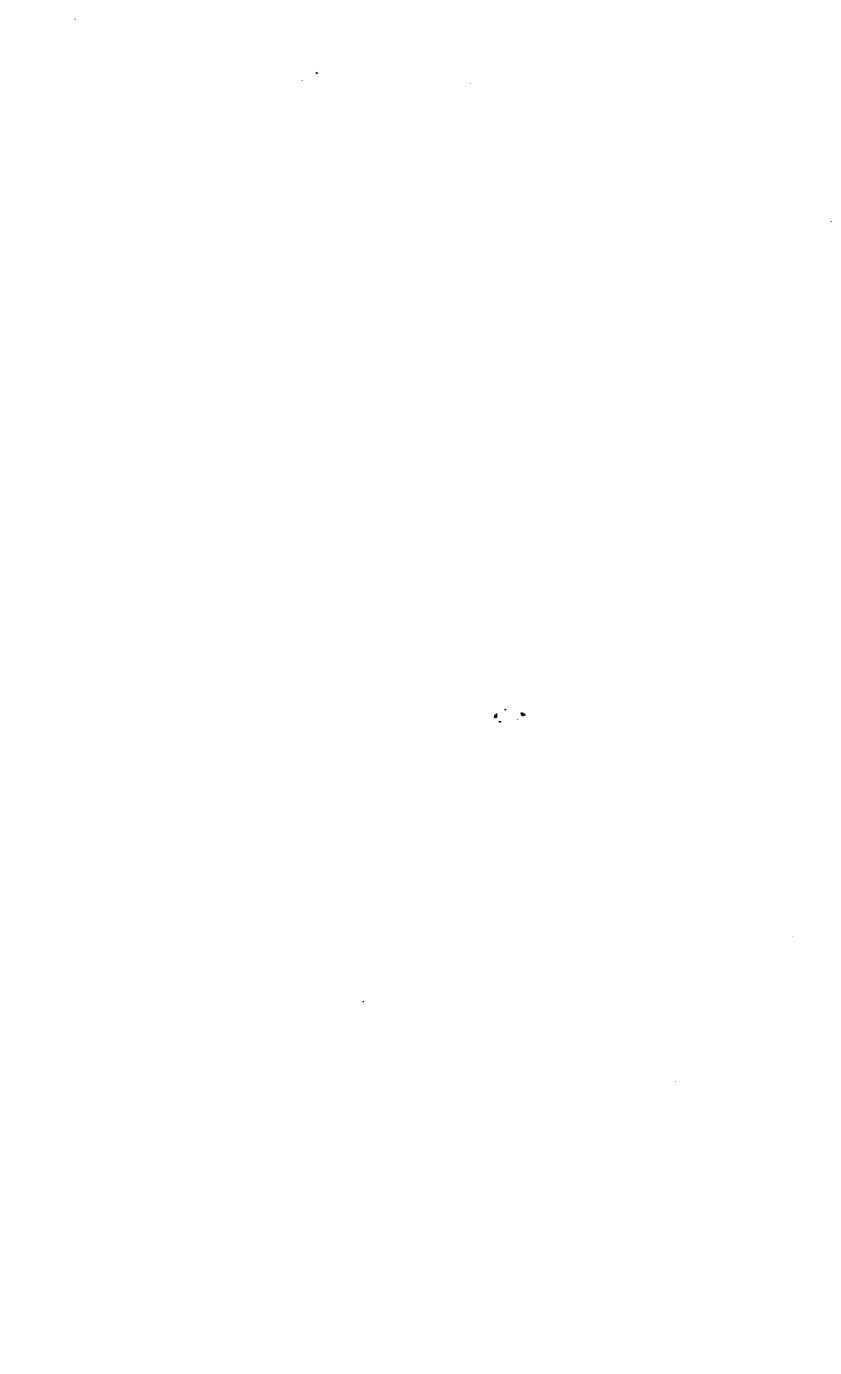
It ought to be a joy to obey his commands, and those who actually obey them say that it is; but the study of this passage forces us to note how "slow to believe" the disciples were. Jesus had done his best—I say it reverently—to impress on his disciples that he was coming out of that grave on the third day. Their intimate association with him must have convinced them of the trustworthiness of his words. It would not have been surprising had they not slept a wink between the Crucifixion and the Resurrection, as they watched eagerly for that third day. The surprise is that they had forgotten all about it, and none of them, not even the women, had any idea that he would rise from the dead. So strongly do preconceptions influence the mental processes. Maybe we are just about as dumb today. The

words of our Lord are perfectly plain and their meaning absolutely clear, and yet the surprising Christian today is one who dares to believe God's words and to act accordingly. Strange, isn't it?

You know, in the light of our Lord's command and of the assurance accompanying its carrying out, it is terrible to think of the present condition of the world for which he died. I cannot believe that this horrible condition is of the planning of our Lord; I believe it is upon us because of our failure to do what he commanded. Maybe we can stand a little personal self-examination. More than nineteen hundred years ago the Master gave the words of his Great Commission to his followers, and yet most of us haven't gone anywhere, haven't started anywhere, haven't even thought of going anywhere. Are these words too strong? I hope so; but I have lots of evidence, personal and otherwise, that they are fairly conservative. I wonder if we are aware of the need of this gospel entrusted to us. For the first time in the memory of most of us, Christians—including just professing, nominal Christians—are in the minority in our country. Not long since, I was protesting rather vigorously against a certain program sponsored by a local government on the ground that it was not Christian, when a friend said, "Well, you must remember that a majority of the voters are not Christian, and they must be considered." It shocked me, and more than once since then I have said to myself, "Has the time come when the Christian appeal is of no avail?" Statisticians tell us, and support their words with figures, that at the present rate it is only a matter of a few years until our beloved Southland, stronghold of evangelical religion, becomes a pagan section. Without any statistics all of us, as we walk about, see

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ample evidence of the very thing that we are talking about. A godless America can't give the gospel to the world. The world need is, of course, even more appalling—and we are not ready to meet it. I have dreamed, and I keep on wishing, that we might send a Christian expeditionary force of 100,000 of our choicest young women and young men into China immediately upon the close of the present war. I verily believe that under the blessing of God and with the encouragement of China's perfectly marvelous Christian leadership that great old country could be brought to God in a day. The time is now for every one of us to dedicate himself fully to the work of our Lord and to become actively sensitive to his every call.



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